



THE AUTHOR,

Frontispiece.



SOUTH SEA  
REMINISCENCES  
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ILLUSTRATED

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## PREFACE

A PREFACE is the porch or entrance to a book, and it “argues a deficiency in taste,” Isaac D’Israeli goes on to say, “to turn over an elaborate preface unread.” This is as may be, but I think that Stevenson had the truer insight when he wrote, “a preface is more than an author can resist; it is the reward of his labours.” It is somewhat with this latter feeling, a sort of “so far I’ve been working for you, the general reader, but now it’s my turn” idea, that having just completed the following book I now,—in a cart-before-the-horse fashion,—start to write the preface.

When one has finished a book it is with a curiously mixed feeling of relief and regret that one lays down the pen. Relief that the boredom is over (for if it bores the reader to read, he can now be let into the secret that, in patches, it often equally bores the writer to write), and regret that the joy of being able to give of one’s best,—a joy that more than balances the boredom, or books would never be written,—is now at an end. There is always, I think, an underlying regret also that one has somehow not been able to get all the things one would wish into the theme of the book. One constantly is thinking, “Why didn’t I mention so-and-so, or such-and-such a thing?” when it is too late and would upset the poise of the completed work to make an after-insertion. In this way I feel that there is much that I should have put in, much that might have made the book more interesting, for my note-books are still crammed with odds and ends that I would have liked to lay before you; but there it is, the



reader must only take these rambling reminiscences at their face value, and rest content with what is actually there.

In another book I have gathered together the folklore and legends of the natives among whom I lived; and in yet another and more serious one I have endeavoured to reconstruct the ancient history of these once powerful races; but in the present book I have merely given a light sketch of life in the South Seas as it is to-day, or rather as it was for the last decade or so leading up to the middle of the war, when I left Fiji for France and ultimately, on transfer, to other colonies. And light, and I am afraid even flippant, as it is in many parts, I do think that some day it may be found to be at least worth the paper it is written upon, because it happens to be a record of that period which in the years to come will have a deeper meaning in the history of the Pacific than we at present realize.

For those years were the years of transition, the halting-place between the primitive simplicity of the early days and the on-sweeping wave of the white man's civilization, a civilization which is now rapidly engulfing these "Children of the Sun." That this civilization, once assimilated, will be for their ultimate benefit I, for one, do not doubt; for we have only to compare, for instance, the uncouth ruffian of our "middle ages" with the Englishman of to-day; but the years of assimilation are not going to be too easy for the native, and that is a point to be ever borne in mind by those who rule him. His old ideas have gone by the board, and he has not yet had time to establish a proper perspective. The war gave him the opportunity of realizing for the first time that white men were no longer beings of almost another sphere, creatures not so very



far removed from the gods. He knew,—the knowledge was thrust upon him,—that even white lords, as nations, flew at each others' throats, and reviled each other after the manner of the "kaisi" or inferior classes. The illustrated papers opened his eyes to the weakness of the white man; but the hidden strength, the greatness of nations, was not so obviously apparent.

Moreover, natives, for the first time in any numbers, left their own islands for Europe, and saw to what depths white men,—aye, and white women, too,—can descend. Some think that this was not good for native eyes. I do not agree. For the policy of England in ruling native races should not be to keep them in blind ignorance of England's faults; in other words, to withhold all knowledge of the outside world from them, for such a policy can only lead to tribulation in the end. We should rather insist on a thorough education, to fit them to take their places, in the generations to come, side by side with us as allies and friends of England rather than as mere serfs awaiting an opportunity to revolt. And this, I do think, is the policy with which the administration of the natives in our Colonial Empire is being carried on, a policy in direct contrast with that in the late German colonies. But the process must, of course, be a gradual one, for the native mind has a great many centuries yet to catch up; though with well-thought-out schemes of education these centuries may without doubt be cut down to generations only.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a distinct fascination in endeavouring to guide, in however humble a manner and to however small a degree, the destinies of a native people; and it is perhaps this that is the compensation to those in the Colonial



Civil Service ("the men of the long field" as Lyttleton called them) for the many arduous years of work in hot and trying climates. In novels one reads of the tropical scenery and all the joys of tropical life, but one does not have brought home to one the minor worries which have such a cumulative effect; the flies, the mosquitoes, the heat; nor the diseases which lead to the too frequent deaths.

And in many places the loneliness and the depressing climate (for the stagnant atmosphere of the "hot" season has an extraordinarily depressing effect) go far to unhinge men's minds or turn their thoughts to drink as the only relief, with the not infrequent result, as actually happened to a predecessor of mine in one post I held, of the fatal pistol bullet. If one can survive these things and make good, one may perhaps be called "a pioneer," "an empire-builder," or (if it happens to be a very young journalist who is writing) "One of Our Great Proconsuls"; but such things are but little consolation for the best years of one's life spent in trying circumstances on a small salary. However, there is apparently no lack of those who wish to try their hand at it, so that perhaps we may be thankful that the old spirit of our Elizabethan ancestors is still alive in the land.

And now I think I have come to the end of my disgracefully long preface, and can only hope that the reader has struggled through it; even if merely forced to do so by the subtle threat of otherwise being proved to exhibit that "deficiency in taste" which I mentioned at the start.

T. R. ST.-JOINSTON.

ANTIGUA, LEEWARD ISLANDS,  
WEST INDIES.



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**South Sea Reminiscences.**



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# SOUTH SEA REMINISCENCES

## CHAPTER I

### I START ON MY ADVENTURES

THE interview at the Colonial Office was over and I had trodden the funereal, lead-covered staircase for the last time for some years. The glass door by the model steamship had swung to behind my back and here I was in Downing Street, an "officer of the Colonial Service."

I had been interviewed and "vetted" in turn by a very dignified Officer Messenger in a black morning-coat and grey side-whiskers; by Mr. Vernon, an Assistant Private Secretary; and by Mr. G. W. Johnson, C.M.G., a Principal Clerk,—each of whom in my youthful ignorance I had imagined might be Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State,—and I had been informed that I should have to proceed to Fiji at once to fill a sudden vacancy caused by the death by poisoning of a certain Dr. Croker.

This was distinctly alarming, and I had visions of being captured by wild tribesmen and forced to play the part of a modern Socrates, but I found out later that the poor fellow had merely died from blood-poisoning following an operation, a fate that might have met him anywhere. As a matter of fact Fiji is to-day one of our



"safest" colonies, both from the depredations of man and disease; indeed, Sir William Gowers (the famous godfather of "Gowers's tract") told me when he examined me next day for a big life insurance company, that I was going out to the only tropical place where the company asked the same premium as for England itself. "And," he said, wagging his grey beard at me to emphasize his remarks, "the reason you will appreciate when I tell you that malaria is unknown out there."

Not that I was entirely ignorant of what life in the South Seas might be like, as one of the reasons that caused me to apply for Fiji was the fact that my late uncle, Alfred St.-Johnston, the novelist, had travelled through them in the late seventies and had often told me of his rather thrilling experiences among the cannibal mountaineers of Fiji. But the attraction to me was the brilliant word-pictures in his books of the colouring and sunshine of those parts, descriptions which had also elicited the praise of his friend Whistler, a man as warm in the appreciation of those he liked as he was bitter against those he hated.

Sunshine within one's heart is called into being by sunshine outside, and that is one of the great attractions of the tropics. It takes a Mark Tapley indeed to be cheerful on a wet November day in London, but no one can remain sad for long where nature herself is always smiling. Youth and good health are of course potent factors, and the Colonial Office takes care that its officers shall be picked men before exposing them to the chances of tropical life. Not only did I undertake my life insurance examination on my own responsibility, but I also had to be thoroughly overhauled by the Colonial Office



medical adviser, Sir Patrick Manson, of tropical diseases fame.

I received from Downing Street a printed form telling me to call on him on a certain day, and adding that the fee would be one guinea. This brought about a rather amusing incident. My chief reason for giving up private practice was my detestation of the money aspect of it. I always felt the awkwardness of having nervously to ask for a fee as much as I hated the sending out of bills. I suppose I was a very young practitioner! So, knowing what it felt like, I thought I would be especially tactful, and I wrote out a cheque beforehand and put it in an envelope in my pocket, ready to slip unobtrusively on to Sir Patrick's table as I was leaving. After being weighed and pommelled and questioned I at last left the room with my head swimming with cautions and good advice, only to be pulled up at the end of the passage by a stentorian voice bellowing forth "Where's my fee?" . . . I resolved that if ever I should have to have another official examination I would hold a handful of silver all the time as a reminder!

\* \* \* \* \*

At last I was on board the *Adriatic*, then the biggest ship in the world. It was her second trip since launching, and she still glistened with her pristine luxury, a thing of never-ending amazement to me who had never made an ocean voyage before. Captain Smith, who afterwards went down in the unfortunate *Titanic*, was in command, and there were a number of interesting passengers, among whom Kate Douglas Wiggin, whose books on *Rebecca* had gone into I don't know how many editions. There was also a handful of American millionaires returning



to "God's own country"—they ran the Calcutta Sweep up to £400 one night in the smoking-room, much to my annoyance, I being "frozen out" of my poor little bid of 20s.

The journey through New York and Buffalo to Toronto and thence across Canada by the C.P.R. was a journey of delight to me,—having once got over my embarrassment of going to bed behind an inadequate curtain in a long "sleeper" crowded with mixed sexes. As I had a week to spare before boarding the Pacific steamer at Vancouver I broke the journey once or twice to get a better glimpse of the prairies and rivers of the West. Regina I found to be a curious mixture of solid buildings and plank sidewalks, of electric street-lamps and rough timber "saloons" (in ten short years I found on a later visit a complete metamorphosis into a great city with magnificent parliamentary buildings and streets of imposing "stores" glittering with the latest articles of luxury behind their vast plate-glass windows). Here, too, I came across my first Red Indian, dressed complete in moccasins, deerskin, and beads, and solemnly stalking through the streets with a striped blanket proudly thrown across one shoulder. Reminded by this of the wild natives among whom I was about to cast my own lot I proceeded,—quite unnecessarily, as it afterwards turned out,—to purchase a revolver; and, thinking that a little quiet practice would be useful, I walked out of the town on to the prairie, in those days but a few yards away. I walked on for some distance till there was only one small log cabin in the neighbourhood, and it being a hot day I lay on my back and was soon asleep. After a while I was awakened by a low growl behind my back, and lazily turning round I nearly jumped out of my skin on beholding an enormous



bear rearing up on his hind legs. Heroically I resolved to sell my life dearly, trying at the same time to recollect what the shopman had said about the working of the safety catch, when to my relief I saw that my friend was chained from a belt to a stake, and was apparently sitting up and begging for a biscuit. I found it was a pet of the cottager, and had been sleeping behind the long grass when I first approached.

So ended my first big-game experience, but my next was soon to follow, for I came across two small boys armed with rook-rifles who told me they were going “gopher-shootin’,” and invited me to join them. I didn’t know what a gopher was, but thought that here was a chance to try the new revolver, so off we went. Presently we came to the gopher grounds, and young Bill started softly to whistle, his weapon at “the ready.” Presently up popped from a hole in the ground an inquisitive little creature, a mixture between a rat and a squirrel. Bang went Bill’s rifle, and “One” shouted Bill in triumph. Dick then had his turn; and excited by the sport I took up my turn with the revolver. At the end of the afternoon the boys had scored twenty-five between them, and I had scored two, but neither with the revolver. I ultimately came to the conclusion that in a foray I should stand a better chance by using the butt end of the implement. A day or so later, through the good offices of a kindly stranger, I had a bit of salmon fishing in the Thompson River, where I did better; and I was also able to go over the Red Indian reserve at Kamloops, a township where the Chinaman ekes out a precarious living washing for gold in the river and a profitable one washing for gold in the laundry.

And so I eventually reached the great Pacific slope



and the train bore me down through fragrant orchards and fields of flowers to Vancouver City. The expression "doing a great Pacific slope" was, I afterwards found, only too often used in the South Sea islands with reference to the unobtrusive flitting, on some passing ship, of one of the wasters who had found the local storekeepers at length hardening their hearts to further credit! In the old days the younger sons who could not be found "a place" or "a family living" and who refused to work at home were shipped off "to the colonies," meaning Australia or Canada, as the islands were then but little known. Some made good by hard work in their new environment, and some were helped by luck, as in the case of an adventurous great-uncle of mine, who found himself one day stranded with the last hundred dollars or so of his money in this very city of Vancouver, which then consisted of about two shacks and a log hut. He fell in with some sharps who gave him a merry evening in the one saloon of the place and then induced him to part with all his remaining money for a block of local land. He had just sense enough left to get the papers signed, and to have them locked up by the bar-keeper before he went to bed in his boots. However, he held on to his bit of paper, and to-day the land, in the heart of Vancouver City, is bringing in some £5,000 a year to his children!

Vancouver is a delightful town, and the residential part of it, like that of Victoria on the adjacent Vancouver Island (a nomenclature very confusing to the stranger), contains the homes of many retired English army men and civil servants, who have found the climate of England too rigorous after their years of tropical life. Such a one was Colonel Falkland Warren, C.M.G., an old Mutiny



veteran and late Chief Secretary to the Government of Cyprus. (The township of Falkland, British Columbia, is named after him.) He happened to be travelling part of the way in the train with me, and in the kindest manner asked me up to his house on arrival in Vancouver, put me up at the local club, and went out of his way generally to make things easy for me. This is the extraordinary thing that I have always noticed when travelling, how frigid the average Englishman is at home, and how hospitable he becomes when transplanted abroad. As a young man and a stranger travelling for the first time, I greatly appreciated these little acts of kindness, and I resolved to try and follow the same good example whenever I could.

\* \* \* \* \*

What a different vessel I found awaiting me for the transpacific journey! The good ship *Moana*, of some 3,000 tons burthen, was notorious for her cockroaches and her list, and she slithered along on her side—luckily over a glassy sea—at what appeared to be an angle of thirty degrees all the way across. As fellow-passengers I had Lady Plunket (daughter of that Marquis of Dufferin whose *Letters from High Latitudes* gained him as much fame as did his Viceroyalty of India) going out to rejoin her husband, the Governor of New Zealand; her sister-in-law, now the Hon. Mrs. Lyon, wearing the then unusual monocle; and an A.D.C., the Hon. N. C. Gathorne-Hardy. The last two, together with my cabin companion, a young Australian sheep-farmer, and myself, used to make up a four for bridge out on deck on the hot still evenings. The Australian was a Brookman, son of the pioneer of Kalgoorlie, and I think that the son's sheep had proved



to be even a better investment than the father's mines. There were also on board Sir Thomas Bent, the popular Premier of Victoria, who delighted to tell me tales of how he started as a boy in a greengrocer's shop ("they could never get the best of old Tom," he used to say) and one or two other Australian politicians returning from a tour in the old country.

After some ten days at sea in a crowded ship, the weather getting warmer every day, it was a matter of great relief to us all to have a day ashore at Honolulu, a jewel of delight set in the tropic seas. How green and fresh everything looked as we neared the island in the early morning, threading our way along a line of posts that marked the channel, on a clear day like this sufficiently shown by the contrasting blue of the deep water with the vivid emerald green of the more shallow sea over the adjacent reef. The Americans have indeed made a pleasure spot of Honolulu, with all the fascinations of a Pacific island combined with all the comforts of a modern civilization. There was even an "auto" or two to be seen, things at that time comparatively scarce in England. And an excellent service of electric trams through the wide, clean streets, past picturesque little green and red bungalows and out into the country, out to the Waikiki beaches, where, after an inspired luncheon at the quaint-looking Moana Hotel, I had a talk with the world-renowned native swimmer, Duke Kahanamoku. I afterwards saw him doing some of his feats among the surf-riders, who stood upright on their planks, whizzing in at tremendous speed on the top of the mile-long rollers. The Prince of Wales received some lessons in surfing from this same Kahanamoku when passing through Honolulu thirteen years later.





HAWAIIAN MAIDEN.



HAWAIIAN DANCING GIRL



SAN CRISTOVAL MAN.



HAWAIIAN PREPARING POI,







Here, too, I drank my first green coconut, the cool, refreshing draught a thing to be ever remembered, and a nectar of the gods utterly different to the stale "milk" of the dried-up nuts one sees at home.

And so back again to the ship, pausing awhile to listen to the soft strains of the Hawaiian band playing among the fairy lights in the park, playing a music new to Western ears, but the entrancing melody of which was in a later decade to draw all London to one of the great restaurants of the Strand. And with the dreamlike notes of *A wreath of flowers* still ringing in our ears we came to the wharf and found a vision of soft-eyed, laughing girls lifting their rounded arms to place a parting wreath of flowers about their lovers' necks, for some of the natives were to travel on across the seas with us. And so in the darkness the steamer slowly and silently parted from the wharf and passed into the night, the sounds of "Aloha" ("my love to you") being borne out to us long after, together with the off-shore scent of a thousand flowering trees.

\* \* \* \* \*

A day or so afterwards it was announced that we should shortly be crossing the line, and every one made busy for a visit from Father Neptune. This was, I believe, the last time the ceremony was performed on a passenger ship on that route, as the directors had for some time been receiving complaints from unwilling initiates. But I must confess that I found nothing objectionable if taken in the right spirit, and I was duly "shaved and baptized" like all the rest of the novices.

Sir Thomas Bent was thinly disguised as Father Neptune, and the last picture I saw of him before I was tipped into the sail-bath was that of a somewhat corpulent, grey-



bearded gentleman, clad in a Roman toga, with a tinsel crown tipped rakishly on one side, and munching an enormous slice of a pink water-melon ! His political opponents somehow got hold of a snapshot of this, and it duly appeared in the Australian papers. That evening at a concert was presented to each of the baptized a certificate on blue satin, printed at the ship's printing press, and signed by Sir Thomas Bent. I have mine still.

My first glimpse of Fiji life was the appearance of the harbourmaster's launch with the Health Officer and Customs officials. As it drew nearer to the ship all the passengers crowded to the side with exclamations of surprise and delight. For there, statuesquely posed at intervals round the narrow gunwale, and holding on with one hand to the brass rail along the top of the cabin, stood six magnificent specimens of humanity, with immense upstanding heads of bronze-brown hair, and teeth which flashed white as their owners looked up and smiled a cheery welcome to "the foreigners." Each was dressed simply in a loose white shirt or singlet, and a kilt of white cloth reaching to the knees ; while in their free hands some held long poles and some the two-foot knife that the Fijian is seldom or never seen without.

This must be a deputation of the chiefs of the island, thought we, but on looking closer we found to our amusement and surprise that scattered over their white clothing was the broad arrow that stamps the convict all the world over. And this is what they were, men detailed from the prison for launch duty, for at that time nearly all the prisoners were employed at some job or other in the Government service. In fact, the next thing to strike our eyes as the ship touched the wharf was a ramshackle old van, painted in faded scarlet and blue with the royal



crown and V.R. (in the seventh year of good King Edward's reign !) which came lurching and bumping along at crazy speed down the pier towards us, propelled by half a dozen stalwart convicts, laughing and shouting like a set of schoolboys on a holiday. It was the mail-van coming to meet the steamer, and van and "horses" were all under the charge of an important-looking post-office official, a native in a blue and red shirt and "sulu" or kilt, no hat upon his fuzzy head, and no boots or stockings.



## CHAPTER II

### FROM WAR-DANCES TO CRICKET MATCHES

THERE was quite a reception to Sir Thomas Bent by the many Australians living in Suva, and in the confusion I slipped away to Miss Rennie's boarding-house, which I had been told was the only place to stay at. Not quite the only place, as of course there was the famous "Mrs. Mac's," a little wooden hotel at that time as well known throughout the Pacific as "Lavinia's" in Tahiti. But unlike Madame Lavinia, who gathered all and sundry to her capacious bosom, Mrs. MacDonald, in her pronounced Scottish accent, would fiercely order any trembling traveller off her doorstep who did not happen to take her fancy. "Mac's" afterwards changed hands and blossomed forth with additional wings and an upstairs veranda, but it was then too late, and the splendours of the new Grand Pacific Hotel, built by the Union Steamship Company, never gave it a fair chance.

"Miss Rennie's" was a quaint old rambling bungalow on the top of the hill opposite the club, and by a special arrangement she provided a private luncheon room for those members, chiefly civil servants, who had to stay in town during the middle of the day. There was not yet a motor in the colony, though there was a solitary rickshaw, and—heaven knows how it got there—an aged hansom cab; the officials' houses had not yet been built on



the Domain, and it meant a tedious drive out in a "sulky" to Tamavua, where many of them lived.

Among those whom I used to meet there at lunch were Dr. Corney; F. R. Baxendale, the Deputy Native Commissioner (afterwards transferred to Cyprus), a stout sportsman whose cheery temper could never be ruffled at the practical jokes played on him when he nightly started, with clocklike regularity, to snore in the club billiard-room at 8.30; Alexander, the Chief Police Magistrate, now a judge in East Africa (his cranium, even in those days, obviously cried out for the judicial covering); John Ross,—the Hon. J. K. Ross, I.S.O., perhaps, I should say,—the Collector of Customs (and also Greek epigrams); and many others, good fellows all. The last time I saw Ross was during the war, on Charing Cross platform, dressed in khaki as a private in the "G.R.'s" (Gorgeous Wrecks, as some unkind wag had it) directing troops—correctly, one hopes—into their trains. The way in which grey-bearded retired civil servants from the tropics, who had deserved a well-earned rest, turned out for these long and fatiguing duties on cold wet nights in London has never, I think, been recognized as it might have been.

The Hon. Bolton Corney, I.S.O., for many years Chief Medical Officer of the Colony, was a man for whom no detail of administration was too small to escape notice, and this faculty of methodically collecting and classifying details, showing the bent of the scientific mind, has since his retirement proved of great use to him and to the world generally in his work on the historical geography of the Pacific. He is now on the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, and is the author of several volumes of the Hakluyt Society's publications.



He it was who became my godfather into the ways of colonial life, taking me along as the first duty to "sign the book" at Government House. This very necessary ceremony over, he initiated me into the mysteries of Minute Papers, and then advised me at which "Stores" to make my household purchases. At one of these, Sturt & Co., I came on a friend at once, for old Mr. Sturt, whose long, white Dundreary whiskers were almost as famous in Fiji as the top hat in which he occasionally appeared, immediately asked me whether I was not a relative of that Alfred St.-Johnston who had thought so much of Mrs. Sturt's singing over thirty years ago that he "mentioned it in a book." On my replying in the affirmative the old gentleman beckoned me mysteriously into the back store, where he insisted on my trying a glass of his old port, straight from the wood. And to the day I left Fiji I was, *nolens volens*, on his "free port" list, sometimes to my embarrassment when passing by with certain high and somewhat strait-laced dignitaries of Suva society.

As a result of the call at Government House I received a visit that afternoon from the A.D.C., who told me that an invitation to a dinner later on in the week was on its way and who now brought me a verbal invitation to attend a big "meké," or native dance, that was being got up at Government House that night in honour of Lady Plunket, who was staying over for a few days in Suva. I was rather tired with my first strenuous day ashore, but, as Dr. Corney pointed out, invitations by His Majesty's representative are "commands"; and in any case it would be a pity to miss this meké, which was to be an unusually fine one.

When we reached the place we found all the élite of Suva assembled near a shelter of native timbers facing an



open piece of ground on which the dancers were to perform. I was taken up and introduced to the Governor, Sir Everard im Thurn, who welcomed me very kindly and told me that my name was already familiar to him in connection with my uncle's South Sea books. Had I not wished to appear a flatterer I might truthfully have replied that his name was as familiar to me as my own, for he was as eminent in the sciences, especially natural history and anthropology, as he was as a Governor; and, moreover, at an early age had made a name as the first man to ascend Mount Roraima in South America.

I found him to be a tall, dignified-looking man with a white moustache and small beard, a man who was never put out of countenance, even when, at an official dinner, I once saw him dressed in all the splendour of his orders and decorations but minus his necktie, which he had forgotten to put on!

How shall I describe the weird effect of that first meké, out there under the stars with the tall, ghostly palm-trees swaying among the shadows as a background. Flaring torches were placed at intervals round the ground, and when the procession of dancers came in the fitful gleams fell upon their oiled and flower-garlanded bodies, and threw into high relief their stalwart limbs as they proudly marched along in fours, carrying immense carved war-clubs on their shoulders. Still the procession continued, until there were over two hundred performers on the ground, and then, at a word, they all wheeled round and with a single mighty stamp of their right feet came to a standstill, facing the Governor.

From one corner of the ground all this time there had come a rhythmical tapping of drums and bamboos, manipulated by a seated orchestra of shadowy figures,—



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just made visible by the rising moon, —who were presently to become a vocal chorus also. And now the real meké commenced, for at a low word of command from one of the dancers, a sort of Master of the Ceremonies, the mass of men split up into two and faced each other ; and then the opposing ranks advanced, swaying in unison from side to side, now moving forward by two paces, now withdrawing by one, and raising their clubs as a single man. All these movements were executed in perfect time to the tapping of a little wooden drum, held breast-high by a seated man facing his partner, the striker ; the deeper notes were obtained by other members of the orchestra beating large hollow bamboos vertically against the ground.

It was a mimic fight done to music and obviously founded on the ancient method of real warfare. Another word of command and the two “armies” split again into four, and again into eight, performing most complicated evolutions of wheeling and marching, always raising and shaking their heavy clubs at the same moment.

Wreaths of scented white flowers were around the dancers’ necks, rustling leaves of variegated crotons were fastened above the elbows and below the knees, each man had a dark-coloured “sulu” draped from his waist, and except for this nothing to hide the glistening brown skin of his magnificent torso but a white scarf of filmy native cloth flung across one shoulder. On every man’s breast there gleamed silvery in the moonlight a circular boar’s tusk, white as the flash of teeth that momentarily became visible at the applause that came from the audience, accompanied by cries of “Vinaka, vinaka !” (“Good, good !”), at the close of some especially difficult movement.

The orchestra-chorus were now warming to their work



and quickening the time of the music, and excited cries from the onlookers, among whom were many native chiefs, spurred the dancers on to still greater exertions; till, with sweat streaming from their faces, which had been painted, some black, some patched with red, they made quick feints and rushes, swinging their clubs, panting for breath and trembling with excitement. Then, as if by magic, the whole mass formed together and with one great shout made straight at the audience, the ground trembling at the thud of their feet, and their clubs uplifted and their scarves streaming behind them in the wind.

Even the most hardened onlookers involuntarily drew back a pace, and I must confess to a catch in the throat as I wondered what might happen next, the whole thing seemed so real. The frenzied song of the chorus, the rattling of the drumsticks, and a great shout from the performers broke together with one last crash as the long line dropped, as if carved in stone, on one knee before the Governor.

After the performance, I was invited to "wash the dust from my throat" at the near-by quarters of Inspector Francis (now Attorney-General of British Honduras), of the Armed Native Constabulary, from which body many of the dancers had been drawn; and there I met, among others, Telfer Campbell, then Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, who had come in from his far-off home on lonely Tarawau, 1,200 miles away, to consult the Governor, who was also High Commissioner for all the British islands of the Western Pacific. To show how people meet, and touch hands, and part, among the wide spaces of the Pacific, I may mention that the next time I saw him was thirteen years later, at one of the Ministries during the war. In the meantime



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he had become British Consul at Tonga, and, later, Colonial Secretary of the Gambia.

Next morning I started on my duties and found that I was to be for a few months the Resident Medical Superintendent of the Colonial Hospital, with a fine big house to live in. But the furniture consisted of one official desk together with one official chair, placed in the middle of the largest room, and not a furniture shop within 2,000 miles! I believe that the Government is a little more generous nowadays, but this was indeed a fix to be in, and I realized then why the Colonial Office had advised me to go out a little in advance of my wife so as to get some knowledge of local conditions first of all.

I asked my predecessor, Dr. Wilson, who was just moving out to take charge of a country district, what one did. He cheerfully replied, "It's no use worrying. Things generally right themselves out here, and if you can use a hammer and a saw you can make a few things yourself." And swiftly he pointed to this and that piece of really excellent furniture, saying, "Knocked that table together in a couple of days. Yaka wood. Takes a fine polish, doesn't it?" . . . "Made that settee there. Look at the sinnet foundation under the cushion. You can get your houseboy to plait some like that from the coconuts at the back of the house at any time" . . . and so on. But I found later that he had the reputation of being a first-class amateur carpenter, which I was not.

There was, however, a Chinese carpenter whom I got to make me a meat-safe, the first essential after the purchase of a stretcher-bed and mosquito-net; and a few buckets and kitchen utensils I purchased from my friend Mr. Sturt, who obligingly let me have them on credit. For that was another difficulty. I had left all my available



funds behind for my wife's support in England, and my sole resources in Fiji consisted of the £12 10s. I had drawn from the Treasury that morning, my "half-pay" for the month's voyage out ! The Civil Service was not overpaid in those days.

The next thing was to secure servants, and here I found a treasure indeed in one Henry Lago, literally, Henry the Fly, who, however, always spoke of himself as 'Enry, for a Fijian knows not the letter H. Him I secured for £2 a month, and 10s. for his wife Louisa, who was an expert washerwoman. Heny was a gentleman of travel, and had made, in the capacity of nursemaid, a trip to New Zealand with a former employer. Consequently he spoke a few words of broken English. He it was who assisted me in nefariously removing some broad shelves from a big linen-press (a Government fixture), which we then converted into a hanging wardrobe. The shelves we next laid side by side on the floor, tying a piece of string to a nail I had hammered into the centre. I then drew a big chalk circle on the planks, which we laboriously sawed round (Henry did most of the sawing), and putting some legs underneath we soon had a fashionable round dinner-table, which looked all right when the cloth was laid. Chairs I did not venture to tackle, except canvas deck-chairs, but at tables and sideboards I soon began to think myself an expert. By the time my wife arrived a month or two later I thought I had got together quite a well-furnished home, but, woman-like, the first thing she said was "Where are the curtains ?"

Henry and Louisa stayed with us for the next three years, a long time for Fijians, who soon get restless in one place ; and we never had their like again. I remember one man who was recommended to me in Suva as a good



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cook and general servant (though I found out afterwards that his only experience had been as a gardener). At the moment I had just returned from leave and could get no one else, so took him on with me to Lomaloma, where I was then stationed.

I went on in my small yacht, leaving my wife, who was not a good sailor, to follow a week later in the Government steamer with what other servants she could pick up in the meantime.

The morning after my arrival I told Zacchariah (for that was the new cook's patriarchal name) to get breakfast ready, and then went over to my office to do some work. On my return to the house my worthy factotum proudly led me to the dining-room where, laid out on the table were :—

One tin of mutton (unopened),

One carafe of water from the bedroom, and

Three pieces of boiled yam in an enamelled wash-basin !

Yet in the long run my wife managed to turn Zacchariah into a passably civilized retainer.

South Sea natives, especially those with any Polynesian blood in them, are really very intelligent and quick at picking up things ; and if handled in the right way can be taught almost anything. After I became a District Commissioner and had, among other things, the inhabitants of the local gaol under my own eye, I was able to observe which were the most willing and intelligent among the prisoners, and if I wanted a new servant I would offer that man the job on the expiration of his sentence, unless he happened to have been convicted of any especially heinous crime. But most of them were in for quite minor breaches of native laws and regulations, laws which have of late



years, I am glad to say, been very largely wiped off the code book. Of this I shall have more to say later.

\* \* \* \* \*

Suva was, and still is, a most cosmopolitan place, and at the hospital there were to be found patients of all nations to deal with. Luckily I had a very efficient interpreter in the matron, Miss Anderson, who had, with her sisters, given many years of splendid service to that institution.

In different pavilions were to be seen Fijians, Solomon Islanders, Indians, Chinese, to say nothing of half-castes and Europeans of all sorts, from well-to-do paying patients to typical old beach-combers, relics of the early days. One of my most interesting patients was a young sailor named Quintal Christian, put ashore with phthisis from a man-of-war. He was a direct descendant of one of the famous mutineers of the *Bounty*, the men who, as every one knows, burnt the ship and fled with some Tahitian women in 1790 to lonely Pitcairn Island, where, during the eighteen years in which they remained lost to the world, they had started to build up a new young nation. Fifty years later the population had become greater than the island could support, and they were removed to the erst-while convict station of Norfolk Island, where they still live, sailors all; a simple, God-fearing people, but people for whom in-breeding has lowered the resistance to such outside enemies as consumption. Years later I came on another curious link with the *Bounty*, whose captain, Bligh, had passed near my home in the Lau Islands during that record voyage of 3,000 miles in an open boat from Tonga to Timor. The year following (1791), a warship arrived in Pacific waters in search of the mutineers, and it is considered that Matuku Island, in the Lau Group,



was one of the places called at. Sir Basil Thomson, then a young cadet in Fiji, discovered, about 1885, apparent references to the visit in the fragments of an old historical song handed down from generation to generation by the Matuku natives, who had thus set on record their first vision of the strange "white gods." Thirty-one years later, when nearly all these old songs had unfortunately become extinct in Fiji, I happened to be visiting Matuku Island, and after some trouble I was delighted to find in one village an old woman who gave me the words of a poem concerning the bygone times. I carefully took it down, not knowing at the time the existence of Sir Basil Thomson's previous record. I afterwards got hold of this and compared the two, and they were identical, word for word, through all the many stanzas of the poem!

\* \* \* \* \*

To one coming from a large English institution the hospital at Suva was indeed a strange sight. The various "wards" were connected together by cement paths among the matron's rose-trees. An occasional bread-fruit tree, a clump of bananas, or a pineapple plant could be seen, but fruit trees were not much encouraged in the neighbourhood of the wards, where native dysentery patients would otherwise only too often set themselves back by injudicious thefts of what was probably the worst diet they could take.

The native medical students used to troop after one as one was going the rounds, each dressed in a neat white shirt, a white "sulu" or kilt,—and nothing else. They all, somewhat ostentatiously, carried binaural stethoscopes in their hands and put on a "family physician" expression when told to examine a patient's chest. As a matter of



fact they became very useful by the end of their three years' course, for they had to pass a regular first, intermediate, and final examination during that time, and attend lectures and practical demonstrations continuously. If successful at their final they were given a diploma to practise, but valid only in the colony and for Government duties.

Like all young Fijians of the better class, they were desperately keen on "Kirikiti" and "Vutuvolo" (as they pronounced cricket and football), and at the latter game, under Association rules, they always kicked the ball with the big toe doubled up in what would be a most painful manner to a white man. I suppose it was a choice of evils, however, with them, as a straight kick with the point of the naked toe would probably have caused a dislocation.

At kirikiti both they and the police used to send challenges to some of the leading white teams, and give them a very good game too, just as a picked Fijian (native) team has toured round Australia and not seldom turned the tables on the leading teams there.

Fijians at times used to get waves of cricket madness almost as badly as the Tongans, where it had to be checked by law; and in the outlying villages would keep up a match of anything between forty and fifty a side for several weeks on end. When they had pads, the coveted insignia of a proved player, they would wear them strapped on to their naked bootless legs with a somewhat ludicrous effect, but a very necessary protection from the fierce "semi-throws" that were hurled at the unfortunate batsman.

Another distinguishing mark that rather amused me once up-country was when my house-boy, Esau, came in one day with his hair cut away from one side of his head, looking



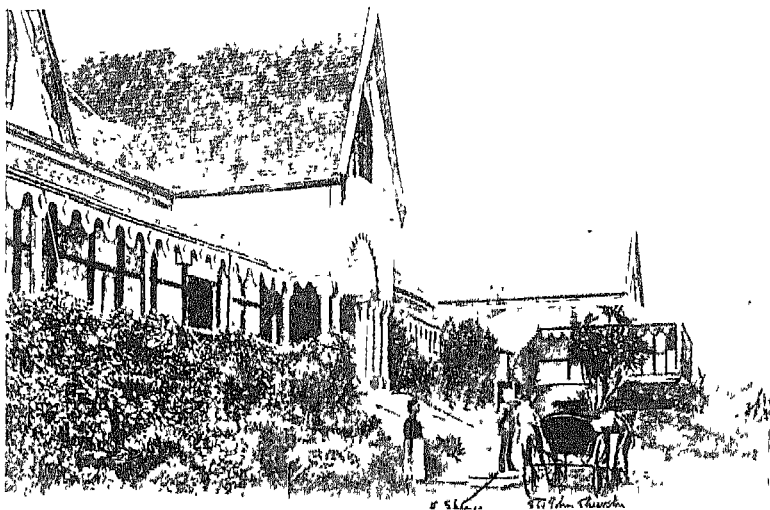
like a somewhat weird "parting," for the remainder stood up as usual like a bass broom with bristles five inches long. I asked him what on earth he had been doing, and he replied, "Sir, I am now a member of the Lomaloma 'A' team, and we have agreed to cut our hair like this, as the Store cannot get eleven sashes all the same colour."

But in the capital, under the keen tutorship of Mr. Udal,<sup>1</sup> one time Attorney-General, and an ex-county player; Mr. Allardyce (now Sir William Allardyce, Governor of Tasmania), a former Colonial Secretary and also a county cricketer; and Mr. Mahaffey, the succeeding Colonial Secretary, they kept within strict rules, and some very good play was the result. Mahaffey, the son of Sir John Mahaffey, the well-known Greek scholar and Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, afterwards became Administrator of the West Indian island of Dominica, in the colony known as the Leeward Islands, and by a strange turn of fate it subsequently fell to my lot to be appointed Colonial Secretary of the same colony, thus taking official precedence of him who had formerly been Colonial Secretary over me. But the poor fellow died in one of the influenza epidemics while I was actually on my way to my new post, so that I never had a chance of renewing acquaintance with a man who was one of the most genial and universally popular people I ever met.

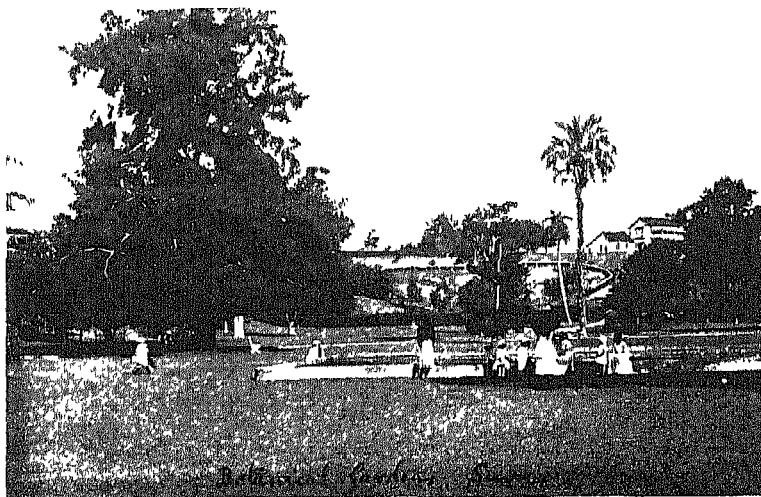
Ratu Popi, grandson of the late King Thakambau, is still a bowler worth going miles to see; and he greatly surprised on one occasion, I remember, a cricketing visitor we once had, an old Carthusian player named Stanley Jamieson. A Guy's medical student himself, he was much interested in our budding medicos at the hospital,

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Chief Justice of the Leeward Islands. He was a direct descendant of the famous author of *Ralph Roister-Doister*.





GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SUVA



BOTANICAL GARDENS, SUVA.







and was full of ideas as to the future of medicine in that part of the world. But when he got home he married the daughter of a famous Liberal whip (now taking *otium cum dignitate* in the gilded chamber), and forsook the ways of Æsculapius for those of Demosthenes. Thirteen years later, when I was doing temporary duty in one branch of the War Office, I had occasion to call in at the office of the Deputy Secretary of State, Ian MacPherson, and to my surprise recognized in his Private Secretary my old cricketing acquaintance of Fiji. He asked me, with a twinkle in his eye, if "brown bowlers" were still the fashion in Fiji, Ratu Popi having performed an exceptional fine hat-trick one afternoon while we were present.

The cricket ground at Suva was picturesquely situated facing the sea and next to the Botanical Gardens, which during the administration of Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott were changed from an unkempt tangle of undergrowth to one of the finest gardens for their size in the southern hemisphere. A gang of prisoners kept the place in order, and it was one of the few works that they, especially the Fijians, took a real interest in, as a Fijian is a born gardener and loves to cultivate the soil.

But even so it can never be said that they were loath to go home to prison when dusk fell, for the prison in Suva was truly their "home from home." In fact, the whole prison system of Fiji was at one time such a Gilbertian affair that it was the talk of all the South Seas, and some of the anecdotes concerning it I will reserve for the next chapter.



### CHAPTER III

#### “STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE”

To appreciate the Fijian's attitude towards a term of imprisonment it is necessary to understand his way of looking at things generally, and this is that of a light-hearted, careless child, with a tinge of eastern philosophy thrown in. At the moment of his sentence he is very much down in the dumps, but his spontaneous gaiety soon comes bubbling up to the surface and he quickly gets used to his new surroundings. He seldom has any conscience pricking him, for the offence for which he is committed under the white man's laws, even if a serious one (which it practically never is), is probably not half so criminal in his eyes as would be either disrespect to a chief or refusing to share one's food with a passing stranger.

After all, what is theft, says he, but merely a proof of praiseworthy cunning? What is assault, but a proof of his bravery? Murder he seldom commits, as he is too superstitious to risk the sudden awakening of a sleeping man; while for him to murder a wide-awake man is no easy task, especially as he has no rifles or revolvers to do it from a safe distance. Moreover, murder usually implies a cold-blooded waiting for an opportunity, and though a Fijian may nurse a grievance for a time, his will-power is seldom strong enough to let it influence him to such an extent as this.



When the British Government took over the administration of Fiji a certain amount of native (chiefly unwritten) law was in force, law which had the authority of centuries of custom, and which in many respects was well adapted to the country and the people. The new authorities wisely accepted all the best parts of this, and had them codified and printed as the "Lawa-i-Taukei" or Native Regulations, for use in cases of native versus native only; and very valuable they proved to be for nearly fifty years of British rule. But *tempora mutantur*, and now the natives are becoming more educated and civilized it is obvious that many of these old laws are anachronisms; and, in fact, they are now being abolished altogether. Indeed, the last decade or so of their time showed many incongruities, and perhaps this is one reason why the law-courts, the gaols, and the gaol-dwellers of Fiji have been so fruitful a cause of risibility to the passing traveller.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,"—especially when there are only three sides to it, as was the case until recent years at the imposing-looking (from the front) Central Gaol,—at the capital of Fiji! The back was a gently sloping hillside, where the botanically-minded prisoner could wander quietly away picking flowers or gazing at the fleecy clouds, until he could make a dash over the crest of the hill. But this was seldom done, as there is no big town, Suva itself not excluded, where a stranger could remain unnoticed for more than a few hours. Moreover, there was comfortable board and lodging in the gaol, with a reasonable prospect of tobacco or kava when you went on duty as a messenger to one of the Government officials, so why worry?

And so, when the fourth side of the prison was, after



many years, decided upon, it became a source of much inconvenience to the prisoners, not because it restrained their wanderings, but because *they could now be locked out*. The story goes that after this harsh step was taken a prisoner was found one evening weeping bitterly outside the gates at five minutes past six because he was late !

In my own experience I remember that shortly after I went to Lau as District Commissioner my native sergeant solemnly called my attention to a hole in the roof of the gaol, which he said he thought really ought to be seen to, as he found that the prisoners had been crawling in through it in the early mornings after a festive night with their friends in the town. I must confess to a certain sympathy with them, but this was beyond a joke; so I had it mended. That night I heard, issuing from the gaol window, a reproachful little song skilfully woven into the evening hymn which they had always been allowed to sing,—especially when an amateur preacher was among them, a frequent occurrence. It was just a few lines, sung more in sorrow than in anger, and giving a brief and simple recital of the whole proceedings since the sergeant had discovered the hole, and telling how the carpenter had been sent for and how the yangona (kava) bowl would in future be waiting, neglected, for them in the village. It quite touched my heart to listen to it.

Of course a spell in gaol was sometimes a nuisance, as it might interfere with one's attendance at the annual missionary meeting or at a marriage feast; but still, "time is made for slaves," and there would be, no doubt, many more meetings, many more marriages. And they quite recognized that even the kindest-hearted of magistrates had sometimes to give them "gaol without the option," for the white man's ideas of inflicting money fines were



obviously too silly for words. Everyone knew that if the convicted one had no money he had only to “keri-keri ” (make an earnest request) from some more fortunate neighbour and etiquette would forbid a refusal. (One magistrate, knowing this, went to the other extreme, and was in consequence playfully known throughout the district as “Ratu Vula Ono ”—“Mr. Six Months.” I am afraid that such a rough and ready method of dealing out the law would not pass muster nowadays, but the poor fellow is dead now, after a very adventurous career, which included some free-lance war-correspondence in the Russo-Japanese War.)

Moreover, there were some offences under the “Lawa-i-Taukei ” which did not admit the alternative of a fine, such were witchcraft, lapses from the straight path of matrimony, and one or two other similar heinous crimes ! For the second of these offences the punishment was up to twelve months’ hard labour, which sounds very serious if one fails to take into consideration (a) what the “hard labour ” really meant, and (b) that this wise law thus prevented the injured husband hitting the “Co ” on the head with a club ; for when the prisoner was led away from the dock and had his hair cut, revenge was gratified to the full and all anger passed away. In fact, on the day that the offender was released from durance vile I have frequently had all three of the principals in the *cause célèbre* come up to me hand in hand, and, sitting on the grass outside my office, the smiling damsel between them with a red hibiscus flower coquettishly set over one ear, they would ask that divorce proceedings should now be started, “in order that Suliana might now marry Wilisoni.” The next stage was a feast, so that all their friends might celebrate the triple event of the release



from gaol, the reconciliation, and the future happiness of the new marriage!

The prisoners seldom showed any ill-feeling for the "little difference of opinion" between them and the magistrate that had caused their incarceration. They recognized that justice had been done. It was simply their bad luck to be caught. So also, they were usually on the best of terms with the warders, who frequently lent a hand with the work if they felt bored while looking on. And of course the warders treated them with all the politeness due from one gentleman to another, as is customary among all Polynesian peoples; in fact, if the prisoner happened to be a chief, I have heard a warder address him as "Sir," and seen him carry the spade for him on going off to work, though this was when I was supposed to be out of the way, as both parties when I was present would recognize the white man's strange prejudices about prison discipline.

Discipline was not quite so strict a few years ago, and the famous dinner party at Government House will long be remembered among the gossips at the clubs. It appeared that the Governor's A.D.C. had arranged as usual for a gang of prisoners to wash the dishes up and help generally in the back premises. The native warder in charge thought that here was a Heaven-sent opportunity to try the white man's drinks, and so sampled all the wine-glasses as they came out, not quite empty. He also got hold of a bottle of the same "ginger-beer" that the white lords inside seemed to be enjoying so much. At first he was with difficulty kept in order by his protégés, but soon afterwards he dropped into a peaceful slumber, and at the end of the evening the convicts picked up their friend and quietly carried him home to gaol in the dark



and put him to bed, so that he might not get into trouble with the authorities.

The use of prison labour was at one time one of the compensations to a District Commissioner for having to live exiled away up-country on a small salary, for at all events he did not have to go to the expense of engaging servants. Proud indeed was the prisoner who could assume the title of "Cook-to-the-Magistrate," a high office, to say nothing of the advantage of being able to feed one's friends. Later on,—I think it was soon after I first went out,—an order came that prisoners were no longer to be employed as indoor servants, and finally the whole system was abolished entirely, no doubt a very right and proper step, as it might easily lead to abuse. But while it lasted it led to some very incongruous situations, as on one occasion when the "head-butler" at a dinner party was found severely reprimanding his own warder for not sending along a "kitchen-maid" in time to wash the wine-glasses.

A term in gaol is to this day reckoned in the native's mind as having been "in the Government Service." I remember once coming across the "Buli" or head chief of Mualevu district (his baptismal name was Mata-ni-ika, or "Fish-eye,") giving some really good technical instructions to a party of his people who were engaged in building a new road. He was showing them how, in the absence of blasting-powder, they might split up by heat a big limestone rock that lay in the way, and how they were to put a proper "camber" and side drains to the new road. I asked him where he had learnt his engineering, and he replied proudly, "Oh, that was when I was doing six months' Government work in Korovou" (the Central Gaol).



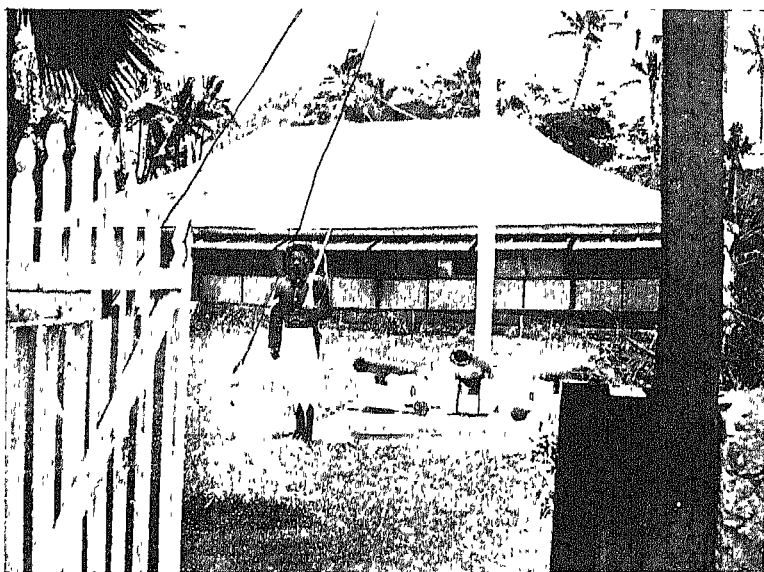
An amusing incident happened once in Lomaloma, and came about in this way. Two men, called Alipati and Wiliami, had been charged with stealing a watch, which Alipati had then tried to sell to the local storekeeper. The case was clearly proved against Alipati and he was given three months; but there was not sufficient evidence to convict in the case of Wiliami and he was dismissed, chiefly on a technical point. This appeared to have rankled somewhat in Alipati's mind, who felt that Wiliami had "gone back on him," and the next scene in the story was when my sergeant came to me in a great state one day to say that his best tunic was missing from the barracks. As he said, almost with tears in his eyes, "I wouldn't mind so much if it hadn't been my *Sunday* one, the one with the brass buttons." Even as he was speaking I saw him look over my shoulder and his jaw drop, for there in the distance was Alipati, proudly arrayed in the tunic in question, and dragging along his quondam friend Wiliami! It appeared that Alipati had slipped away from a working party in the little copse at the back of the gaol, taken the sergeant's uniform when no one was in the barracks, and then walked into the village, telling the head-man he had been authorized to arrest Wiliami, and showing the garb of office as a proof. He then brought him up, with a confused idea in his head of having the case re-opened and extorting a confession from Wiliami, so that he also could share his fate.

Saying I would consider Alipati's punishment later, I sent the parties about their business while I could still keep a straight face. An hour later, when my sides were still aching, the sergeant brought up to me an imposing charge-sheet against Alipati for "Burglary, Trespass,





FAMILY GROUP AND 'ENRY AT OUR FIRST STATION IN P.H.I.



MY BUNGALOW AT LOMALOMA.







Talaidredre and Vakatumburarawa,"<sup>1</sup> the two latter strange crimes, namely "Disobedience" and "Causing One's Anger to Arise," being still at that time in the native code book. But I had to content him with merely ordering a week's extra punishment-drill and reduced rations to the delinquent, who had not really contemplated any great harm.

Another somewhat topsy-turvy case was that of a former Chief Justice, Sir Fielding Clarke. I give it as it was told me by a mutual friend, and trust that Sir Fielding will forgive me if any detail is not correct. It seems that the Chief Justice was once on a tour with some other Government officials through some of the mountain districts, and as dusk fell they lost their guides, who had the stores, and at last arrived very hungry at a large village, where they decided to stay for the night. A house was found for them and they settled down to their evening meal, a rather scanty menu of tepid yam, put before them with many apologies from the village head-man, who said there had been a big wedding that afternoon and that all the food had already been shared out and disposed of.

Sir Fielding, who was then new to the colony and only understood a few words of the language, afterwards went for a stroll round the village, leaving his still hungry friends to console themselves as best they could with tobacco. After a somewhat lengthy interval he returned, beaming all over, and said, "What a cheery, hospitable house I have found down there," pointing to a large, well-lit house facing them at the end of the town. "I was strolling past and they asked me in, and pressed upon me some excellent

<sup>1</sup> I have purposely throughout this book avoided the local and so-called "Fijian" spelling, as it is only misleading to the general public.



boiled fowl and roasted bread-fruit, followed up by a bowl of first-class yangona, after which there was some very good singing." One of the party who knew the language turned to a man standing by and asked what house that was at the end of the village. "Oh, that, sir, is the gaol," came the astounding reply! I think this must be one of the few instances on record where a Chief Justice has unconsciously helped a party of convicts in disposing of their duly apportioned share of a wedding feast.

As I have said before, escape from gaol was in the old days seldom attempted, partly because there was no town big enough to remain undiscovered in, and partly because a native is too superstitious to enjoy a solitary life in the woods or mountains. But there are exceptions to every rule, and I remember one man, Livai by name, who persistently broke out of gaol, a regular South Sea Jack Sheppard, and a real criminal to boot. At length I decided to send him off in charge of a warder to the central gaol at Suva, two hundred miles away, on the next monthly steamer.

At the very last moment, the night before the steamer was due, he was caught breaking through the doubly strengthened wooden floor of the special lock-up, so in desperation I had him ironed hand and foot, giving the strictest injunctions to the warder that he was to be on the *qui vive* every moment of the time until the man had been handed over at Suva Gaol and a receipt obtained for him. Just before the steamer sailed I had occasion to go down to the landing-place, and there I saw Apenai, my trusty warder, sitting cross-legged on the ground, with the irons in a heap beside him, good-naturedly explaining to a crowd of little boys the mechanism of the spring locks! . . . He jumped up, saluted, and—fore-



stalling my angry questions—said, “Livai begged as a favour that he might just go into the village to buy a new shirt before starting, as he said he was really ashamed to go to the big town (Suva) in the one he has on.” . . . (This was his “official” one, with the broad arrows on.)

We caught him; he hadn't got far, and I just had time to bundle him off with the now disillusioned Apenai; but what *are* you to do with such people?

Yes, escapes from the colony were rare, but in earlier times escapes *to* the colony were occasionally known. It is said that at the beginning of the nineteenth century a party of convicts from Botany Bay escaped in a small boat across nearly 2,000 miles of sea to “the islands,” fetching up at Fiji. Among these was a notorious scoundrel named Paddy O'Connor, who lived to a stout old age, his only regret in his declining years being that his half-caste family of forty-nine could not have reached fifty.

Another very interesting little drama, which happened only recently, had for its characters an ex-prisoner from the neighbouring French convict island of New Caledonia; a well-known Roman Catholic priest of Fiji—since unfrocked; an alleged Fijian “princess,” who was taken off to Europe dressed, among other things, in a pearl necklace of fabulous value; and a smart Suva lawyer; while the distant island of Fanning (where the German raiders from the *Emden* cut the Pacific cable) entered also into the scene of the story. As some of the persons are still alive and the drama is perhaps not yet finished, the unfolding of this story must be postponed for the time.

Desperate characters among the whites are now, however



very rare (though there was for a long time a Belgian in Suva Gaol doing a life sentence for piracy and murder committed on the high seas, in the neighbourhood of the Solomon Islands), but the criminal records of the imported Indian coolies are unfortunately a very striking contrast to the milder lapses of the native Fijians; and for this reason the somewhat slack prison discipline of the old days has had to be tightened up. The Suva Gaol has in recent years been re-organized and practically rebuilt, and all regulations are much stricter. It was my unpleasant duty, when I was once stationed for a brief time in Suva, as—among other things—Medical Officer to the Gaol, to have to be present at floggings and hangings. The former was a sickening sight (I used to think the whippings with canes were even worse than the inflictions of the "cat"), but a hanging I just managed to escape by one day. The medical officer had an authorized fee of three guineas for his presence at each hanging, and there were to be three of them in a batch next day, but I gladly resigned all claims to this wealth when the joyful news came that I was to get a transfer to a better appointment, and that my successor would have to be on duty for the eight o'clock performance on the morrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

By the way, I am told that the idea for that dramatic little thrill, *Eight o'Clock*, by R. Berkeley, recently played in Grand Guignol, London, came to him as he was leaving the Fiji Court-house after the dread sentence had just been pronounced on a client of his who had been arraigned for murder. Berkeley came from an old West Indian family, but his father was a lawyer in



Fiji before him, and his uncle was the Sir Henry Berkeley who was at one time Chief Justice in Fiji and later Attorney-General at Hong-Kong. As a jaunty, curly-headed young man he left Fiji with one of the contingents for the war and gained an M.C. for some good work in Flanders; but after the armistice he turned his attention to writing, and has already produced, among other plays, that very successful comedy *French Leave*, as well as one or two books. The last time I met him we happened by a coincidence to be allotted adjacent seats at the big Middle Temple dinner on the occasion of the Prince of Wales being made a Bencher, in 1919. He airily told me that *he and the Prince of Wales* were the youngest members, having both been only "called" that evening, but I wouldn't have been much surprised to hear that it had been proposed to make Berkeley a Bencher also! He has such a way of "getting there."

\* \* \* \* \*

Although the prison regulations are now much stricter in Fiji, they still allow for the use of prisoners "for boats' crews, weeding compounds, cutting firewood for Government officers, and grass for their cows, and removing furniture for officers on transfer," and of course the general labouring work that they do on road-making, marine works, etc., saves the colony thousands of pounds in a year.

The crew for the Government yacht *Annandale*, which for some ten years carried me safely all over the 80,000 square miles of ocean in which lay the islands of my huge and scattered district, was entirely composed of prisoners, apart from the captain and the engineer;



## 52 "STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE"

and I shall always look back with the warmest feelings to my light-hearted convict crews, who worked cheerfully and well, and who saved my life on scores of occasions. And some of my wanderings in the *Annie Daly*—as their pronounciation of the name sounded,—I will relate in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER IV

### CORAL REEFS AND STORMY SEAS

WHEN, after I had been a year or two in the Singatoka and Tholo districts, the Government made me the offer of a new appointment as a sort of general Pooh Bah in charge of the Lau Group (a cluster of twenty-seven scattered islands about 200 miles to the east of Fiji) at double my former salary, there was also a promise made that a special yacht should be built to enable me to move about in the vast spaces of my new domain.

This promise was faithfully kept, and the result was the *Annandale*, the first auxiliary built in Fiji, a cutter-rigged vessel of some twenty tons yacht-measurement, though only about fifteen tons actual register. She was heavily built and doubly strengthened in all directions to withstand the heavy seas for which Lau is notorious, and was sheathed in the finest quality copper to prevent the onslaught of the boring sea-worms that infest most tropical waters. She was a big, roomy boat with a fo'c'sle, saloon, and engine-room, and fitted with electric light; but I needed all the comfort I could get to balance the miseries of the long journeys in stormy seas that were to be my fate for the future.

Of course it was not *always* stormy in Lau, and sometimes for days on end there would be a flat calm without a breath of air to ripple the glassy sea, motionless under



the scorching heat of the midday sun. This is where the auxiliary power would come in, *when the engines did not happen to be out of order*. But rough weather was the rule, for the "Trades" blow hard against this unprotected group for about ten months in the year.

Brought up in an inland town in England, the mysteries of sailing were at first all Greek to me, but I was fortunate to obtain for a captain an honest and cheerful old Tongan named Natha. He had broken teeth and spoke Fijian through them with a strong Tongan accent, a language then quite strange to me, and it took me a long time before I could pick up the new patois. In fact, the Lau pronunciation generally I found to be quite different from the Nadroga dialect that I had grown accustomed to on the main island of Fiji.

As for engines, I knew nothing of them (it must be remembered that I had left England before the motor-car was the common domestic article it is to-day), and the misdeeds of a succession of native engine-drivers there were no means, therefore, of checking, except when common sense hinted that it might be as well if I called off one stalwart Samoan I had when he was about to hit the fly-wheel with a sledge hammer to make it go round! After the dynasty of native engineers, behold, one Corley, an old Irishman whose real profession was that of bricklayer and plasterer, turned up and applied for the job. Corley was a white man, honest as the day, and though his ideas about engines were of the wildest, I gladly accepted him as a relief from the nightmare of his predecessors. He was a most eccentric old character, perhaps a little too fond of "the cratur," and of a restful life; garrulous to a degree, but remarkably well informed and full of yarns of the old days in Australia and the South Seas. He absorbed all



sorts of odd scraps of learning, and on our long journeys together he became an assiduous reader of everything that came his way, from fragments of old newspapers in which my provisions were wrapped to any abstruse medical or legal tome that I happened to have with me.

On every trip for the first few months we would start gaily off with the engines beating rhythmically and happily, but after a few miles I would hear strange sounds of hammering and tinkering down below, the engine would begin to sob and squeal like a lost child, and Corley's face would appear above the hatch, covered with perspiration, but smiling as always, with his old eyes blinking behind a pair of spectacles. "What's the matter, Corley," I would say; and the inevitable answer would be, "Shure, sorr, I think I must have dropped a nut in the injun, and I'll have to stop her a bit till I find it."

Generally the stoppage became a permanent one and we had to do the remainder of our tour under sail, followed up by a trip to Suva and civilization for Corley, who had to go along with the *Annandale* to the engineering shops "to show thim how ut happened." In time I became so suspicious that one day I burst out, "Damn it, Corley, do you think you're keeping a grocer's shop down there with all your nuts? If this happens again I'll have the engines taken out of her altogether, and you'll lose your job." "Be aisy, sorr," he replied soothingly, "'twas only a *small* nut!" It may have been only coincidence, but from about that time dated a new era with the engines, and all was well.

Time softens all things, and looking back on those days I forget the miseries of them, the stormy passages when by day we battled on, a tiny cockle-shell tossed about amid vast towering seas in a desolate waste of grey waters, and



by night we lay hove to, in constant dread of drifting on to some unknown reef in the darkness. I remember one such night off the Ono Islands, a tiny cluster so far on the way to New Zealand that it is off the Fiji chart altogether. We had left port that evening thinking all was well, but a few hours later there sprang up one of those sudden storms, known locally as "Tokavuki," that smite the Southern seas like a blow from some gigantic clenched fist.

There was a hollow roar from the south-east, a great wall of foaming black seas seemed to lift their heads at us out of the darkness, and at the same time came a furious deluge of rain, accompanied by a crash of thunder and a vivid flash,—like the sudden opening and shutting of a great door,—of sheet lightning; sheet lightning, however, such as I never saw before, for it appeared positively to have a purple colour.

Natha, with the greatest presence of mind, had yelled out to some of the crew to lower the sails and others to batten up the hatch; and as the mighty seas took us he skilfully edged her off and finally ran before them under bare poles. . . . The wind quickly veered round to the north-west and continued to blow hard from that quarter for some hours, and when the dawn came we found ourselves amid tumbling seas much nearer to Tonga than to Fiji. Eventually we took advantage of another slant, and made our way back again into our own waters, sighting Ogea Island about midday, and thankful to be still above the surface.

But it was not always thus, and there were days and nights, especially nights, when sailing was a thing of joy. Sometimes I have awakened with a sort of feeling that the dawn was near (how or why I cannot tell, but there is



a kind of extra sense of time that all men acquire when living away from the haunts of civilization), and I have gone up on deck to drink in the beauty of it.

All is dark as yet, but one can just make out the dim figure of the helmsman, still and motionless, at the stern. Overhead the huge shadow of the mainsail alternately blots out and discloses, as the ship sways with an easy motion, the stars, which are now fast disappearing as if some giant breath were blowing out the last twinkling candles in a great vaulted ballroom. There is a gentle lapping noise as the water ripples past the bows, and a quiet rhythmical creaking as the boom shifts against the mast and the ropes tighten and slacken as she lifts to the waves; but beyond that all is still, and one has a feeling of being alone in the great spaces of time. Even as one looks a long low bank of dark cloud seems to grow blacker where the horizon ought to be, blacker because its outline is now being defined by a paler area of the vault behind it. And now the sky towards the east has a distinct glow in it, it seems to be quivering with life; and shafts of light radiate, and are lost, and shoot forth again, from behind the banks of cloud. Red streaks appear among the shadows, and for the first time the sea itself becomes visible, and grey wavelets can be seen between the ship and the sky; while over there to the east appears the dim shape of a distant island, a shadow whose outline hardens and grows more distinct even as one gazes at it, till now the peaks become quite clear, and with the growing light one realizes that it is close to. Tufted palm-trees appear on the crest of its hills, the shape becomes familiar, and there stands our destination, the island to which the captain had promised he would bring us by daybreak. . . .

The art of navigation has always been a mystery to me,



and how old Natha managed to find his way about in those wide empty spaces, steering clear of the hidden reefs and allowing for the many diverse currents, was always a source of never-failing wonder. He used to do strange calculations with parallel rulers and compasses on a chart spread out on the cabin hatch, biting a stubby bit of pencil, but I believe it was mostly instinct and a natural gift for sailing that carried him along; though it was said that he knew every reef in the 30,000 miles of Lau waters "like the inside of his hat"—if he had had one, but this was an article he never wore, merely wrapping a handkerchief around his bald head if it happened to be unusually hot. I know that I had the greatest confidence in him, and would far sooner have sailed with him and the sturdy little *Annandale* than in such a man-of-war, for instance, as the famous H.M.S. *Torch*, the last of the old "steam-sail" vessels, which was still on duty in those waters. This was the ship, it will be remembered, from which a piece of a much perforated, worn-out, rusty plate was held up to the admiring gaze of the House of Commons a year or two before the war as an instance of what our navy was coming to.

I think I also felt safer on the *Annandale* than on the s.s. *Dorrigo*, a small cargo steamer which used to cruise about the islands and on which I once took passage from one part of my group to another. During the first night I certainly thought we were going to roll right over more than once, and on the next morning the steward took away what little appetite I had left by dragging a sheep along by the hind legs and proceeding to cut its throat on the so-called "passengers' deck" just where I was sitting. I didn't fancy the breakfast chop after that, and so had nothing to eat till we reached Moala Island,



a three days' fast. Here the *Annandale* was waiting for me at anchor in calm water, so I went straight on board and fell to on a good breakfast of coffee and tinned sheeps' tongues,—after which I was violently sick !

Whether it was the reaction, or whether because the mutton family was still haunting me, I know not ; but I have never had the courage to face sheeps' tongues again from that day to this.

Poor old *Dorrigo*, she had a wonderful adventure on one occasion. She was anchored in a deep, narrow, oval-shaped bay at the north end of Vanua Balavu Island, the principal island of the Lau Group, and where my headquarters were. High cliffs surround this natural basin, coming sheer down to the water's edge all round, except at the entrance, so that the bay is for all the world like a gigantic bottle, open only to the sky and at the entrance. No breeze seems to ripple its waters, which are always calm and smooth, and of a beautiful green colour, due to the reflected light thrown back from the translucent depths that cover its sandy floor. Rough rocks, with hardy knotted creepers and stunted trees, line the steep echoing cliffs, and around the whole bay is but one small beach of sand, some sixty feet in width.

Here, where no storm could reach it, was surely a safe haven for any ship ; yet as the *Dorrigo* lay anchored there one day, shipping copra from the estate that lay beyond the cliff tops, a fearful hurricane arose, and the first direction of the storm was *straight in at the neck of the bottle*. The ship's head, of course, swung round to it, and the captain had three other great anchors put out, and finally full steam ahead, but even then the chains snapped one by one, and at last she was flung, racing blindly like a mad thing, against the side of one of the cliffs. The bridge



snapped off and collapsed, the captain was hurled down on his head and one shoulder, and the few men on board, just stopping to pick him up, made one jump for the rocks and scrambled into safety.

Almost at once the ship sheered off again, practically uninjured, but deserted; the engines still racing and without any guiding hand at the wheel. In this condition she was driven across the bay, and, for all the world like a human creature, she hesitated once, and then decided to go, bow-on, to the only bit of soft sand in the whole place, the little beach I have mentioned before. Who will say that ships have no soul after this?

I was sent for in great haste next morning, and managed to patch the skipper up; he had a collar-bone and three ribs broken, but seemed otherwise not much the worse. I likewise found a gang of natives to help lighten the ship and jettison some coal she was carrying, so that within three days she was able to proceed under the direction of the resolute old Scotsman down to Suva. But a few months later, such is the irony of fate, she ran on to a hidden reef, within a mile of the scene of her late adventure, in a glassy calm, so calm that not a ripple stirred the surface to show where the danger lurked; and this, combined with the thought of the probable loss of his "ticket" and his livelihood, so preyed upon the captain's mind that he straightway retired to his cabin and took a heavy dose of laudanum from the medicine chest, a sad ending to all his hopes, poor fellow!

The *Dorrigo* was again got off, practically without mishap, but I think she began to be considered an unlucky ship after that. Anyhow, she left the local waters about that time and may have changed her name. I never heard of her again.



Another reason why I felt fairly safe when cruising about in the *Anmandule* was that she carried a particularly large and heavy whale-boat, pointed at both ends for dashing through the big surf rollers which barred the approach at so many of the landing-places, and also fitted like a life-boat with copper tanks for extra buoyancy. With this and a good supply of life-belts on board one felt less uneasy, though on one or two occasions there is no doubt that we had some very close shaves. One time I remember we were carried by a sudden squall of wind and a strong current on to the jagged edge of the reef that marked a passage near Doi Island, and for a few minutes it was "touch and go," literally, for every minute we expected that the next time she touched the reef a hole would be driven in her side, when she would have inevitably filled and gone toppling off the edge of this submarine precipice into about 200 feet of water. We managed, however, to drag her along with kedge anchors into a shallow place, but there she lay, piled up and immovable, for eleven days, until the spring tides happened to come, during which time I had to camp out on Doi Island, with only a few natives to talk to, and nothing to read.

On other occasions we have been partly dismayed and had the sails blown away, but somehow or other we generally managed to creep safely home to port, sometimes after an absence of four or five weeks, and much overdue. . . .

I never had to swim for it, except in an occasional upset from the whale-boat, and was truly thankful that this was so, for I am but a poor swimmer, and should have stood little chance in those heavy seas. Yet the natives themselves have done some wonderful swims there, swims that would be almost incredible were they not so well



## 62 CORAL REEFS AND STORMY SEAS

authenticated. I suppose the great thing is to be able to keep up one's strength and circulation, and the warm tropical seas make a tremendous difference in this respect. Also the natives, especially the women, are usually inclined to be stout, a great help to swimmers when it is combined with muscular strength; while their skin is habitually oiled with coconut oil, so that the water does not chill them so much.

Mafi, the wife of old Natha, has often told me about her great swim when she and her former husband, Waisca, were wrecked in a canoe near the Navatu reef many years ago. The canoe broke up and foundered, leaving them with a paddle, a piece of plank, and a small watertight wooden box containing the post-office mails and some Government money. They swam all the next day, resting at intervals, and much helped by their wooden floats, and on the following day, Sunday, they managed to seize a coconut that was drifting by them and break it open and eat it; but by this time they were getting very exhausted. That evening they sighted Totoya Island, and in the early hours of next morning they just managed to stagger ashore to the beach, where a short time afterwards they were picked up nearly dead by some passers by. But they had clung to His Majesty's mails all through, in the water from Friday until Monday, and safely delivered them, for which they received a suitable reward and a much-treasured letter from the Government.

In 1915 I happened to call in at Mothe Island, and found that a death-feast had just been held for two men and a little boy belonging to the place, whose empty canoe had lately drifted in from the sea. I went on to Namuka Island, far down to the south, and there I found



the very people, alive and well, and a strange tale they had to unfold.

It appeared that the three of them had started, with two pet dogs, from Namuka for Vulaga Island, and that half-way across a heavy sea had broken off the solid outrigger, while the canoe itself had been carried away beyond their reach and hidden by the squall. Their boxes and all their property were upset and sank, except a knife and a Bible which they happened to snatch up as the accident occurred. They placed the child astride the outrigger and started swimming for Vulaga, plainly visible, but some eleven miles away. Some hours later they found they were making no progress, owing to the set of the current, so they turned for the Yangasa, a cluster of uninhabited islets belonging to Lord Stanmore, a gift from the natives to his father, Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor of Fiji.

The two dogs had been clinging to the outrigger all this time, sometimes swimming, sometimes resting upon it; but here tragedy arose from the depths in the shape of a shark, which picked off first one dog and then the other, but was finally driven off, apparently satisfied for the time with these *hors d'œuvres*. And so the swim went on, until towards evening their feet touched the outer reef of Little Yangasa, and they scrambled to safety.

But their adventures were not yet over, for here they were marooned on a desert island, dimly visible at a distance from the other islands, but barren and therefore useless from a native's point of view, and so never visited from one year's end to another. The first thing to do was to climb one of the few palms and bring down some coconuts, and after assuaging their thirst they proceeded to make a fire in the almost forgotten manner of their



forefathers, by rubbing together in a special way two pieces of dried stick ;—no easy thing to do, I can speak from experience. They next surveyed the extent of their domain, and discovered some shell-fish on the rocks, and, better still, some bits of old wreckage. The boy was then set to work to weave some “bolabola,” or mats, from coconut leaves, a trick that every child learns almost in infancy, while the two men gathered up all the wreckage they could find, together with some strong creepers from the scrub fringing the shore. These tropical creepers are unlike anything found in temperate climates, but are hard, yet pliant, natural twisted ropes, ranging from a quarter of an inch up to two inches or more in thickness, and for hauling purposes are often actually preferred by the natives to “foreign” ropes.

With these they started to build a raft, and then laced the bolabola together to make a sail, gathered up a good heap of coconuts and shell-fish, and within twenty-four hours they had launched their rickety craft and faced the perils of the deep once more.

With the aid of wind and current they made Namuka, reaching there only a few days before I called in, and it fell to my lot to pass the word on to their people that they were still in the land of the living. I calculated that, allowing for their change of direction, they had swum nineteen miles with the boy on the outrigger ; while about the same distance had been covered, though in greater safety, on their improvised raft.

I never came across a poor swimmer among the South Sea natives. They either could not swim at all, like some of the mountaineer tribesmen I knew in the heart of the Tholo mountains in Fiji, who had never yet set eyes on the sea, or else, if they were coastal people, they could



swim like fishes—or penguins. In fact, when I was afterwards stationed in the Antarctic, at the Falkland Islands, I used to watch the penguins zigzagging about at great speed under water, and I was more reminded of a South Sea Islander at his water sports than anything else I could think of. Small babies are taken into the sea as soon as they can stand and before they can properly walk, and apparently find out for themselves, or perhaps they copy other slightly bigger babies, the art of paddling along like a puppy ; and by the time they are four or five years of age they are expert swimmers.

*I used to watch the little brown children at play in the warm shallow sea that came up over a wide sandy beach in front of my house at Lomaloma. Boat-sailing was, as it is at home, the favourite pastime, but the boats were made of a half coconut-shell, complete with husk, and with a broad, stiff green leaf spiked upright in it for a sail. Another amusement, popular with the grown-up “ children ” as well as the younger generation, was jumping off the end of a coconut log which was placed slanting-ways across, and projecting a little beyond, the fork of an upright, fixed in rather deeper water. They then ran up this inclined plane and jumped feet foremost from the projecting end in a “ follow-my-leader ” game, amid much laughter and excitement. But I seldom saw a native dive in head first. “ It was not the custom,” and that, among South Sea natives, is sufficient explanation for anything.*

Under-water swimming was another game of skill, and they used to keep under for incredible periods, until I became quite anxious ; but the swimmer always came up smiling and tossing back his or her long hair from the eyes. Sometimes my wife and I would get pu a little



picnic on the yacht to the lagoon at Raviravi, about five miles away, taking some of the native boys and girls with us. They would amuse themselves by diving down into the green clear depths for the oysters that strewed the sandy bottom, oysters of delicious flavour, and whose shells inside were of the finest "mother-of-pearl," gems of real beauty. The natives always ate theirs boiled, at teatime over the camp fire, but we, being more "uncivilized," used to take our share home, to eat, shamefully, raw at dinner, and try and persuade ourselves we were back in dear drizzly London, dropping in at "Scott's" again.

The most wonderful swimmers I ever saw were undoubtedly two Gilbert Islanders that were in the retinue of a local trader in Lau. They were really more at home in the water than on land, and nothing seemed to come amiss to them. I only once had a chance of seeing them do the famous trick of attacking a shark with a piece of stick, and I missed the actual fight by a few minutes, though I saw the shark brought in to the beach just afterwards, with the stick still in his jaws. One of them, seeing a shark in the water near the wharf, had actually jumped in with only a double-pointed piece of stick, about eighteen inches long, in his hand. He then waited for the shark to turn over, and as it snapped open its great jaws he rapidly thrust his arm, with the stick, between them. The jaws closed on to it and there it stuck, propping the ugly mouth open, so that the shark looked for all the world like a fractious and bewildered dentist's patient waiting for the next step. But the next step was soon to come, for before the shark had time to recover from its amazement another brown shape had slipped noiselessly in, and the second Gilbert Islander had delivered the *coup de grâce* with his keen knife.



A favourite trick with some of the Polynesians is to dive down from a canoe with a long rope and noose a shark's tail while its owner is asleep with his head in some cavern of the reef. After that ensues a trial of strength as to whether the shark can be dragged on board or whether the canoe and its occupants will dash off for an involuntary cruise, dragged by their curious steed.

Polynesians are noted for agility in the water, and also for their powers of endurance there; but great swimming speed is the exception rather than the rule,—though, of course, there is the case of Duke Kahanamoku of Hawaii, whom I have already mentioned, who holds the world's record for the hundred metres.

Melanesians, on the other hand, are not as a rule such expert swimmers, though they have plenty of practice, and their canoe fights often cause upsets among them. They are a much wilder and more savage people, on a far lower scale of humanity, and do not devote much of their lives to the happy enjoyment of harmless sports in the water, as do the laughter-loving Polynesians, and this may partly account for their inferiority in aquatic pursuits. But they are, I think, a much more determined people, and when trained are much more to be relied upon than their careless, happy-go-lucky brethren of the eastern ocean. During the first few years of my time in Fiji I had a great deal to do with Melanesians from all parts of the Western Pacific, and some of my recollections of them and of other imported "foreigners" I propose to give in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER V

### A MEETING-PLACE OF NATIONS

BEFORE saying anything about the quaint ways of the Melanesians I would like to correct an error that has crept even into the official designation of these people, and to explain generally who they are and where they have come from.

Even before a settled Government came to Fiji with the hoisting of the British flag in 1875, it was evident that the future prosperity of the country must depend on its capacity to export its tropical products, products which would need to be carefully cultivated and properly handled by a plentiful supply of agricultural labourers working under skilled supervision. The first industry that had any appreciable effect on the world's markets was that of cotton-growing, an industry whose real start in Fiji was due to the almost complete cessation of cotton-growing in America, owing to the Civil War there.

Now, cotton-growing requires at the time of picking the crop a large and reliable body of labourers who will be regularly at work day after day until the crop is finished. The Fijians are excellent workers at any strenuous job that can be started with an enthusiastic rush, laboured at with one's whole heart and strength for an hour or two, and then dropped for a few days, or perhaps a few weeks, or even months, for time has no meaning in their eyes.



But they hate the idea of being tied down to any regular, deliberate, methodical work, and nothing will induce them to stick to it for more than a day or so. Moreover, they are very independent people, and cannot be made to do what they dislike. The result was that the planters had to turn to other places, and welcomed any wandering trading schooner that happened to come in with a few natives from other islands ; at first, no doubt, men from some defeated tribes who gladly welcomed the opportunity of getting away in the white man's ship. Subsequently a regular trade in “recruiting ” labourers for the plantations sprang up, evils began to creep into the system, and for a time it resolved itself into a little better than an organized stealing of natives to sell into slavery ; and the expression “black-birding in the Pacific ” gained for itself a sinister meaning all over the civilized world. The islands with the most peaceable and well-behaved natives were naturally first selected for this nefarious traffic, and thus the earliest imported labourers into Fiji were from the *Polynesian* islands of Manahiki, Tahiti, Pleasant (Nauru), and similar places. Then, in 1875, one of the first things the new Government did was to regulate this traffic and put a stop as far as possible to the illegal methods of obtaining recruits hitherto in vogue. Laws were passed, and the labourers were, correctly, described as “Polynesians.” (Now Polynesia is roughly that area of the Pacific to the east of Fiji ; while Melanesia, where the “Melano ” or black-skinned people live, is the area to the west and north-west of Fiji.)

After a time the Polynesian islands began to get exhausted as sources of labour supply, while simultaneously the cotton industry was growing apace, so that the recruiters had to turn their eyes to the more savage islands of



Melanesia, such as the Solomon and New Hebrides groups, with the result that for over twenty years, until about 1912, when all recruiting was finally stopped, the only labourers imported from Pacific waters were *Melanesians*; yet the wording of the laws was not altered, and they were still erroneously described, both officially and by the planters in conversation, as "Polynesian labourers."

When I first went out to Fiji the schooner *Clansman* was still regularly running up to the Solomons recruiting labour, but with a Government Inspector always on board, and with every precaution as to the proper feeding and accommodation of the "recruits." I knew the Inspector, and he used to tell me how the more settled islands, even in the Solomons, had begun to be exhausted as recruiting fields, and how they had to turn to the wilder places where cannibalism was still rampant, and where a shower of poisoned arrows was a quite likely welcome after protestations of friendship had been made and the ship's people had been invited by signs to come ashore. For this reason the ship's boat was generally protected by a second one lying off a little behind it, and in any case no boat was ever allowed to touch the beach, so that they could always get away at a moment's notice; while a man with a loaded rifle always sat in the boat ready and watching the beach party for the first sign of any disturbance.

Sometimes the natives were shy, and one recruiter, who had had a varied career as a mountebank of sorts, adopted the extraordinary procedure of dressing up in an old clown's costume and standing on his head on the beach. Beady eyes looking at him from the bush could not withstand this, and the inquisitive natives soon crowded round; and, charmed with sticks of tobacco and



coloured beads, they soon bargained for some of the young men to hire themselves away to the plantations “ for thirty-six moons.”

But I am afraid that many of them could not really count beyond twenty, and the following is the way a Solomon Islander once performed this abstruse calculation before me as a magistrate. He sat down and solemnly counted off the fingers and thumb of his left hand, five ; then his right, ten ; then, with the wrinkled brow of a professor working out a serious problem, he ticked off the toes of his left foot, fifteen ; and finally, in triumph, three toes of the right foot, eighteen ! And that was the number of shillings that he reckoned were then due to him as back pay. On investigation it turned out that he was quite correct. . . . I was anxious to see what he would have done had it been twenty-three, but I could not make him understand what I wanted.

When they begin to pick up a little English, of a weird sort known as *bêche-de-mer* (or more commonly called “ Beach-de-meer ”)<sup>1</sup> they become very useful citizens, as they are by no means unintelligent, and on the whole are very trustworthy. My first vision of a Solomon Islander was soon after I landed in Fiji, where on point duty as a police constable in the main street I beheld a black-skinned little man, dressed in a dark blue policeman’s tunic with metal number on the collar, a blue “ vandyked ” sulu, a bright red sash, and a truncheon ; no boots or stockings, no hat, nothing else,—except some tattoo on his cheeks, short bits of stick through his nostrils,

<sup>1</sup> Named after the attempts at conversation with the natives by the early sea-captains, who were cruising round in pursuit of the big salt-water slug, known as the trepang or *bêche-de-mer*, to carry off to China, where it is considered a great delicacy.



and a tortoiseshell earring in one ear. He smilingly directed me to the Government Offices (which lay up the hill, past the Cathedral, and to the right) as follows :

Up top, past big feller god-house, then along dis side, and writin'-house he stop there.

I once was called in to see a Solomon patient with colic. He had been helping at an aldermanic and gargantuan feast of turtle, and when I came to him he was sitting on the edge of a bamboo sleeping-shelf in his hut. Shaking his head, he sorrowfully said to me, patting his "lower chest," "Dis feller belly belong me he too sore." I should explain, perhaps, that the possessive "my" is always expressed by "belong me," and as a sort of emphasizing definite article "this fellow" or "that fellow" precedes most nouns. Any woman, or indeed anything of the female sex in the animal world, is known as "Mary." Thus, if I really wanted to make a raw Solomon Island servant comprehend the fact that my wife had gone into town, I should have to say to him, "White Mary belong me no stop !"

This "bêche-de-mer" is the lingua franca of Melanesia, and one can hear with unholy joy Germans, Frenchmen, and other foreigners, *even in islands under their own flags*, having to struggle with this form of English when talking to their employes ; and the reason is that the natives themselves use it in talking to each other, for there are hundreds of different dialects through Melanesia, and a man from a village only ten miles away on the same island might not understand his neighbour without the medium of this common tongue ; the reason being that before the Englishman came along the natives were at constant tribal warfare, and there was practically no



intercourse between different islands, or even different parts of the same island.

This warfare often made it an easy matter for the unscrupulous recruiter to buy from the winning side such captives as had not already been eaten. And it often made it very difficult even for an honest recruiter to carry out faithfully the terms of the agreement, which were to replace the natives, at the end of their three years, in their own villages. The dishonest ones sometimes did not even attempt to do this, but once beyond the eyes of the Government in Fiji they would drop them at the nearest island and leave them to their fate. This often happened at Rotumah Island, the first stopping-place on the return journey after Fiji. (There was a notorious case of this in the incident of Captain Daly and the brig *Lady Alicia*.)

But the placing of a British Commissioner there soon put a stop to this, and, moreover, it was afterwards insisted that the Government Inspector should also travel back with the returned labourers. W. L. Allardyce, now Sir William Allardyce, Governor of Tasmania; W. Collet, now Sir Wilfred Collet, Governor of British Guiana; and F. Fuller, now Sir Francis Fuller, late Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, were three of the early Commissioners to be placed on Rotumah. In later times I was offered the same appointment, but I felt that it might become a sort of cul-de-sac for me, as subsequent Commissioners had not been so fortunate as these three in finding Rotumah a stepping-stone to better things.

One of my earliest duties in Fiji was to medically examine a large batch of raw recruits that had just been brought in on the *Clansman*, and who were at the Suva "depot" awaiting distribution to the various plantations. I found



them assembled in little groups in the compound, mostly squatting in a position of balance, half-sitting on their heels, and with a rather sulky expression on their faces. This was really because they were still strange to their new surroundings, and possibly were not yet quite certain whether the cooking-pot was to be their fate or not. A wild-looking lot, though already they had absorbed certain ideas of civilization, especially with regard to the cotton sulu and net singlet that each of them had been provided with. Some few, however, had carefully wrapped these splendid garments away for more important occasions, and appeared clad simply and economically in what is known as a "Gee string." But tattoo covers a multitude of sins, and likewise does the artificially induced keloid scars with which many were decorated, to say nothing of bits of stick, cut off short, rather like the stumps of Bryant and May's safety matches, and perforating their nostrils. Nearly all had elaborately designed necklaces of small blue and white beads, while some had armlets of woven grass or hair, in which an incongruous clay pipe appeared, in such cases as it was not carefully packed away, sometimes with a box of matches or an empty cotton-reel, into the enormously enlarged slits made in the earlobes.

After examination,—and they were all wonderfully healthy, a normal condition of primitive man,—they were packed off to their new owners, or, I should say, employers, where they were to serve for £8 the first year, £6 the second, and £9 the third. The wages seem small, but the men were fed and lodged, and the articles they could purchase with the money represented untold wealth in the eyes of the Melanesian ; and, after all, it is only the purchasing value of a coin for which we all work. When



later on as a Magistrate I was stationed in the Lau Islands I often met these men again, for their wages had to be paid to them at regular intervals *in front of a Magistrate*. Government Inspectors also paid surprise visits, and there were all sorts of other safeguards against the oppression of these uncivilized "children," for that is all they really were. But I am glad to record that on only one occasion did I have to punish a planter for any act even approaching injustice to one of these labourers, for the planter in Fiji is as good a specimen of our nation as one can find anywhere in the world.

In the early days when cash was but little use to the labourer, as there were but few, if any, stores for them to spend it at, the planters were allowed to pay them in kind ; but the lists of articles were rigorously scrutinized and a regular scale of values was arranged. I have before me an old list showing the kind of thing the Melanesian heart rejoiced in. It represented the final year's wages, and was what he would take back to his own country.

Ninety yards best Manchester print, 1 sandal-wood chest, 2 tomahawks, 1 large knife, 3 blankets, 1 pair of scissors, 2 belts, 1 umbrella, 1 wooden pipe, 3 reels cotton, 4 lb. beads, and 100 sticks tobacco.

The value of these articles out in Fiji years ago would be, of course, much higher than to-day.

Tobacco is in many islands still an article of currency, so many sticks being worth one pig or one wife, as the case may be. Thomas Stockwell, a trader in Lau, told me how, on one of his trading cruises to the Gilberts, he had called on the King of Apemama. Now, they carried a goat on board the schooner, a beast never before seen by the astonished eyes of the natives of those parts. To propitiate the King, Stockwell made him a present of the



animal, which, as is the playful habit of goats, had been accustomed to chew up anything offered to it, even tobacco. "What do you feed it on?" said the King. "Tobacco," replied the schooner's captain, in mischievous mood, and thereupon handed it a stick, which it promptly ate up. "Take it away!" cried the horrified and economically minded King; "I shall be ruined in a week!"

A brass-bound sandal-wood chest, about 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet, with, if possible, a lock that rings a bell on turning the key, represents the acme of bliss to one of these people even to-day, and the last glimpse I had of a batch of time-expired Melanesians was as they were cheerfully toiling up the road to the depot once more, to await the returning *Clansman*, each carrying a box on one shoulder, a hatchet under the other arm, a clay pipe in the mouth, and dressed in blue dungaree trousers, a pair of glistening new yellow boots (often limping with the right boot on the left foot, and vice versa), and on the heads of some of them a battered topec that their late master had given them. The trouble is that only too often on arrival home with these treasures there is a sudden swoop by all their friends and relatives, and in a few minutes the poor fellow has "given" away all he has. Luckily, sorrow is not an abiding emotion with these people, and any little bother of that sort is soon forgotten, while the man has the permanent pride of having been a *traveller*, and henceforth wise above his generation.

But comparatively few of them wanted to return to their islands, and a great number stayed on in Fiji. These, together with their descendants, make up the so-called "Polynesian" element in the census returns of to-day. Adjoining Lomaloma town, where my headquarters in Lau were, was a special village set apart for these people,





BOY WITH FLATTENED HEAD.







and a very law-abiding lot on the whole they were. In another book <sup>1</sup> I have described a quaint dance they got up for me on my lawn on one occasion "as a Christmas gift." . . . "They came dressed up in leaves, coloured sashes, and with red-painted cheeks. Hollow bean-pods rattled round their knees and ankles, and each held in one hand a fan and in the other a carved wooden bird. In a ring following each other they slowly danced round and round, singing a continuous refrain, and stooping, bowed down with the weight of 'Mana' . . . ."

It was from this village that I obtained one of the best "housemaids" I ever had. His name was Lasé, and he was tattooed all over his face, wore a bead necklace, and had slit ears, though not quite so much as some of them. I have had some interesting talks with Professor H. Balfour of Oxford on this subject. He considers that the practice may be analogous to the ancient Asiatic custom of distending the ear lobes, as exemplified in the long-eared images of Chinese gods that one can see in any museum. Mr. Merton King, C.M.G., the Resident Commissioner of the New Hebrides, has sent me some local photographs taken by Mr. Martin Johnson (the "film" expert), and among them one showing another extraordinary deformity that is practised in certain islands, viz. that of flattening the head in infancy, a custom that also exists or existed in some other parts of the world. Another thing is that the Melanesians, especially the New Hebrides men, often have good-sized beards, a very rare thing among Polynesians.

But the lawful, Government-supervised "recruiting" is now as dead as the old illegal "black-birding," of which the notorious Captain "Bully" Hayes was the

<sup>1</sup> *The Islanders of the Pacific*, 1921.



greatest exponent that ever sailed the Pacific. Many are the tales I have heard about him from men who knew him. Some made him out to be a cut-throat villain of the deepest dye, while others (among them Louis Becke, the author, who had sailed with him as supercargo) used to say that he was a handsome and gallant gentleman of courtly manners and charm, who unfortunately had a habit of losing his temper! The general consensus of opinion of those who knew him well seems to incline to the latter view, though there is no doubt that he was guilty of certain acts of piracy, and at one time had a price on his head. Some of his family are still living in Fiji, respected by everyone.

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Long before the importations of Melanesian labour came to an end it was evident that a new and more important industry in Fiji, viz. sugar-growing, would require very large numbers of labourers, more than could be obtained from any islands in the Pacific. The result was that Indian coolies began to be imported, at first from North-East India and later from Madras also.

To-day in certain parts of Fiji, especially the vicinity of the big sugar mills, one might well imagine oneself in the heart of India. Hindustani and Tamil are spoken on every side, little clusters of stores—miniature bazaars—hang out signs in Indian characters, and the streets are thronged with Indians of all degrees, from high-caste Brahmins, rich merchants, planters, down to the whining beggar and the lowest “sweeper” class. Women, veiled or partly veiled, are to be seen, throwing quick glances to the passing stranger from some of the most wonderful eyes in the world, and wearing necklaces of golden British



sovereigns (refreshing sight! ) round their brown throats ; while heavy bangles and anklets of curious chased silver, and perhaps a gemmed stud through one nostril, add a bizarre effect to their general appearance. White is the prevailing colour in the dress of any little crowd of people, but here and there a vivid muslin headshawl of brilliant orange, or a bright green skirt, lends a splash of colour that is not ill-placed in that land of wonderful sunlight.

There are now some 50,000 Indians in Fiji, and it is almost entirely due to their steady and hard-working habits, guided under European direction, that the present prosperity of the colony exists. Unfortunately, to seek Utopia is as "the hunting of the snark," and there is no gainsaying the fact that the welcome advent of the more civilized Indian has also brought with it an increase in the criminal records of the colony that was never dreamed of once the simple-minded Fijian had given up his playful little habit of cannibalism. Murders and robberies with violence are unfortunately not rare among the Indians, and the explanation is nearly always found under one of two heads, viz. jealousy concerning their women-folk, or greed for money. These are the usual motives, but the reason they lead to such extreme crimes is, I think, that to a large extent the Indians that have come over to the Fiji plantations are of the lowest classes, the better classes not having found sufficient attraction to make the venture, and, moreover, many have feared to lose caste by crossing "black water."

In addition to this, it is said that in the past many of the criminal classes (including "wanted" men) in India have found this an easy method of getting clear of the country.

The crime records are, however, tending to diminish



in proportion to the Government endeavours for the improvement of the Indians' living conditions ; and better means of education, better wages, better housing, and a more equal distribution of the sexes have already worked wonders. Not that the conditions were ever really bad, it was rather the type of coolie that was bad. In fact, to the ordinary, thrifty, and well-behaved agricultural labourer, Fiji was regarded as a sort of little heaven compared to the conditions of their own land. In this new country they were well treated and cared for ; could save out of their five years contract-period enough money to set them up on a few acres of good land with horses, cattle, and poultry ; and gradually they could continue to increase their wealth until they became well-to-do farmers, and some of them really rich men.

Yet, in spite of the visible facts, some socialist agitators came along from India and drew up such highly coloured reports that, as in the case of other Crown Colonies, the Government of India decided to discontinue the old contract system of labourers for Fiji, with the result that the future prosperity of the colony is seriously jeopardized. The popular and sporting Bishop (the Right Reverend Dr. Twitchell) and the late Receiver-General (the Hon. R. S. D. Rankine, now Colonial Secretary of Nyasaland) were recently sent to India to try and find a solution of the difficulty ; but the feeling that had been created was too strong for them to do much good ; and one can only hope for the sake of Fiji that some alternative will be found to meet the requirements of the colony.

As I have said, the Indians brought their vices with them, but these were few considering all things, and the good they have done in helping to develop the country is inestimable. . . . One of the said vices was the use of



opium, a very difficult thing to put down, as its small size, compared to its value, renders smuggling a lucrative and comparatively easy thing. And not only did they use it themselves, but unfortunately some of the Fijians started to learn the habit.

I remember that when I was Commissioner of the Lau Islands there was sent up to my special care, because I also happened to be a doctor, a Fijian policeman, a man of chiefly family, who had formerly been a smart senior sergeant, but now reduced to the ranks owing to this unfortunate failing. Not only had he acquired the habit, but his wife (whom it had killed) had learned it from him, and also his small son (baptized Misilindi, an attempt at "Mr. Lynch," and so named after Dr. Lynch, one of the best Chief Medical Officers that ever served in Fiji).

Misilindi was only eight years of age, and a confirmed opium taker! The child was sent off as a boarder to the Government School on distant Lakeba Island, where he had no further chance of acquiring the drug, and the last I saw of him he was growing up into a well-mannered and intelligent youth; but the father, if still alive, is, I am afraid, a hopeless case. Happily, such occurrences among the Fijians are rare.

As, owing both to the criminal propensities of the Indians and also to their intense love of litigation in civil matters, a large part of the court work in all districts, and practically the whole of it in some districts, is composed of Indian cases, it became necessary for the Magistrates to learn Hindustani (and, if possible, Tamil also, though the latter is indeed a jaw-breaker), in order to be able to really follow the ins and outs of the many complicated cases brought before them. A native Indian interpreter



is supplied to all courts, but unfortunately it may happen that it becomes necessary to check the evidence as passed on by him, for interpreters have before now been found to be venal. This, in addition to a very needful knowledge of the Fijian vernacular, made Magistrates and Commissioners become linguists despite themselves. Out in the Lau Islands I also had to have some scanty knowledge of Tongan, owing to the large colony of Tongans, many of whom could hardly speak a word of Fijian, living there. But in my various wanderings over the world none of these languages, except occasionally the smattering of Hindustani, proved of the slightest use to me, and I would gladly have exchanged the lot for a good acquaintance with Spanish or Arabic.

The so-called "plantation Hindustani," or "overseers' bât," is a most extraordinary lingo, but luckily quickly picked up by the coolies, who often, I feel sure, regard it as a new and curious language, and not as the Hindustani it pretends to be! I used to hear some funny instances of this on Mango Island, where there was at one time a mixed crowd of Indian, Melanesian, and Fijian labourers. Neither Indian nor Fijian, strange to say, have ever cared to adopt any sort of "Pidgin English," as the Melanesian has, so that the overseers would turn rapidly from one gang to another, throwing to each little bits of what they fondly thought was the correct language of the country, and generally interlarded—for they were mostly Australians—with a few of the quaint oaths for which that nation is famous, and which, though meaningless to the natives, were an obvious incentive to greater efforts.

The fact of having mixed labour on that remote little island without doubt saved the lives of the handful of white men there on one occasion, including my humble



self. Trouble had been brewing for some time past, fomented by an unruly character who called himself Ganpat Singh, an old gaol-bird who probably had no right at all to that particular name. At last a miniature riot occurred, several somewhat serious assaults took place, and I was asked to come over from Lomaloma to deal with the matter before it spread further. Accompanied by my trusty Fijian sergeant and one Indian policeman, all that could be spared from the small force at my headquarters, I sailed in the *Annandale* for the scene of the disorders, and on arrival set up a police court in a large empty shed, and proceeded to take the charges one by one.

At the close of a long day spent in investigating the whole matter very thoroughly, several of the ringleaders, including Ganpat, were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. Then arose a great hullabaloo, for Ganpat had been posing as a sort of "holy man" among them, and all the Indians in a body crowded round to prevent his being taken away by the sergeant. That scene in the darkness, lit only by the fitful gleams of waving lanterns held by some of the crowd, is one I shall always remember. It was a close sultry night, with thunder in the air, and no doubt tempers were all on edge, as sometimes happens in the tropics. I had just mounted the horse that had been lent to me by the manager to ride back to the coast, and he and his two overseers were likewise mounted, waiting to accompany me, when a sudden rush was made from the ring of menacing faces that surrounded us, and Ganpat was forcibly snatched away from the Indian policeman who was holding him.

I called out to the crowd not to be such fools, and ordered them to give him up at once; and the policeman



rather foolishly seized the man who was now holding Ganpat, and taking him unawares round the neck hurled him to the ground and recaptured our prisoner. I remember at the time likening the whole proceeding to a Rugby football match, with Ganpat as the ball.

But things now began to be serious, other Indians had crowded up, and long knives were brandished with cries of "Kill ! kill !" swelling in volume from the rear. Our Indian policeman was now thoroughly frightened, and made no further pretence of holding on to his man, and the crowd swayed this way and that, while one ugly-looking ruffian made a snatch at my bridle. I caught him a smart blow on the wrist with my riding-crop, but before I could swing my horse round he snarled and seized a knife from another man standing by and started threatening me with that, only waiting some little encouragement from the crowd to spring at me. The manager shouted out in English above the din, "We had better charge through them, I think; but take this first, I've got another here," and I felt a revolver slide into my hand. There is something very reassuring in the possession of a weapon when one has hitherto been unarmed, but I knew it would be a fatal thing to start using it until every other possibility had been tried, and I said as much to the manager. The fact that we were mounted gave us a great pull over our opponents if only we could break a passage through them, but they must have been nearly a hundred strong by now, yelling and brandishing their knives and momentarily threatening to rush us; and our road was but narrow, leading only in one direction from the shed.

Just then the sergeant, who had been standing on a packing-case behind us looking into the darkness over



the crowd, gave a shout in Fijian, and presently we heard a scuffling in the rear, and the Indians began to dissolve away before us. We got our horses going, and laying about us with our riding-whips soon cleared a passage, and met the welcome faces of a gang of Fijians to whom the sergeant had sent a message, and who had cheerfully come running up, luckily only with light sticks, the nearest approach on the spur of the moment they could get to their old-fashioned heavy war clubs. All the Indians bolted for their houses, pursued by the Fijians, lustily smiting them in the rear, and the manager, knowing them well, said that he was sure they would get enough punishment in that way and would turn out all right as usual in the morning, rather sorry for themselves, but otherwise sane and in their right minds, now that the fit of temper was over. Our prisoners were secured and marched down to the ship, but before I left the island I took the precaution of swearing in a number of the Fijians, and also some Solomon Islanders, as Special Constables, and placed them under the charge of my sergeant, whom I left behind for a week or so in case of further trouble.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mango Island is a most valuable property, with a very curious history. It is one of the most prosperous and fertile islands in the Fiji Group, and its undulating plateaus are thickly studded with coconut palms, beneath which fat cattle graze on the luscious grasses. At any fair price of copra the island returns to its lucky owner not far short of £10,000 a year. Yet it was originally sold by a native chief for a case of gin and a musket! This sale was afterwards repudiated, and the next time it changed hands for the sum of 200 dollars in cash. Qolea,



the big Thakaundrove chief, on this occasion was the seller, and he had a legal right to do so as he owned it and many others of Northern Lau by right of ancient family conquest. And therefore, when these islands made an unsuccessful revolt from his rule, he deliberately sold them off to the whites, partly in revenge and partly to rid himself of a troublesome encumbrance. The whites, very naturally, insisted as part of the contract that in every case the resident natives should be removed to the mainland or to some other island, as they foresaw constant squabbles in the future with wild and still cannibal savages if this were not done.

William Hennings, known at one time as "the uncrowned king of Lau," and to whom I shall refer later, was the purchaser of Mango Island, but he owned at the time more islands than he could well manage, so shortly afterwards he sold it to a planter named Ryder (of a well-known English family) for, I believe, £400, but with a somewhat technical clause in the transfer making a time limit for completing certain details of the sale. Ryder seems to have paid or offered the money, but exceeded the time limit in some way, and Hennings, who by now thought that he would be able after all to develop the island, claimed that the sale was null and void. Ryder, however, maintained that the property was his, and he had already settled in his new home; so the matter was referred to the Consul, Captain Jones, V.C., a Crimean hero, for a decision. This was before the days of the British Government, but there existed a law known as the "Peace and Good Order Act," and apparently the Consul decided against Hennings on the ground that if the island were now compulsorily vacated by Ryder serious trouble might ensue and "peace and good order."



be endangered. Anyhow, the fact remains that Hennings felt himself wronged and never set foot on Mango again, although he lived on the neighbouring island for forty years afterwards.

Ryder and his six stalwart sons proceeded to work their *El Dorado* to the fullest extent, and did very well with cotton, eventually selling the island to a Melbourne Company for some £50,000. Unfortunately for the Melbourne Company, it was not long before the great cotton slump came, and the company had to turn to sugar to retrieve their losses. An expensive sugar mill was erected, hope reigned high in their hearts, and a direct line of steamers was started between Melbourne and the new land of sugar. But Mango was quite unsuited to that industry, no one yet knew that its real future lay in copra, and the company cut their losses and retired. The island then changed hands twice, the second time in 1898, when a Scotsman and a Jew (what an alliance!) named Borron and Bowman, bought it for £12,000.

Later on the Jew died, but the Scotsman survived and flourished. This partnership rather reminds one of the libellous little story prevalent in that part of Scotland which is *not* Aberdeen, that . . . "once upon a time there lived a Jew in Aberdeen,—but he died of starvation! . . ."

This particular Scotsman became very famous for "minding the bawbees," and he certainly never missed a chance of saving one.

There were thousands of turkeys that had gone wild and roamed at their own sweet will about the island. But Mr. B. had an eye on their market possibilities, and gave the strictest instructions to his overseers that on no account were they ever to take one except once a year on Christmas Day, when one turkey might be cooked

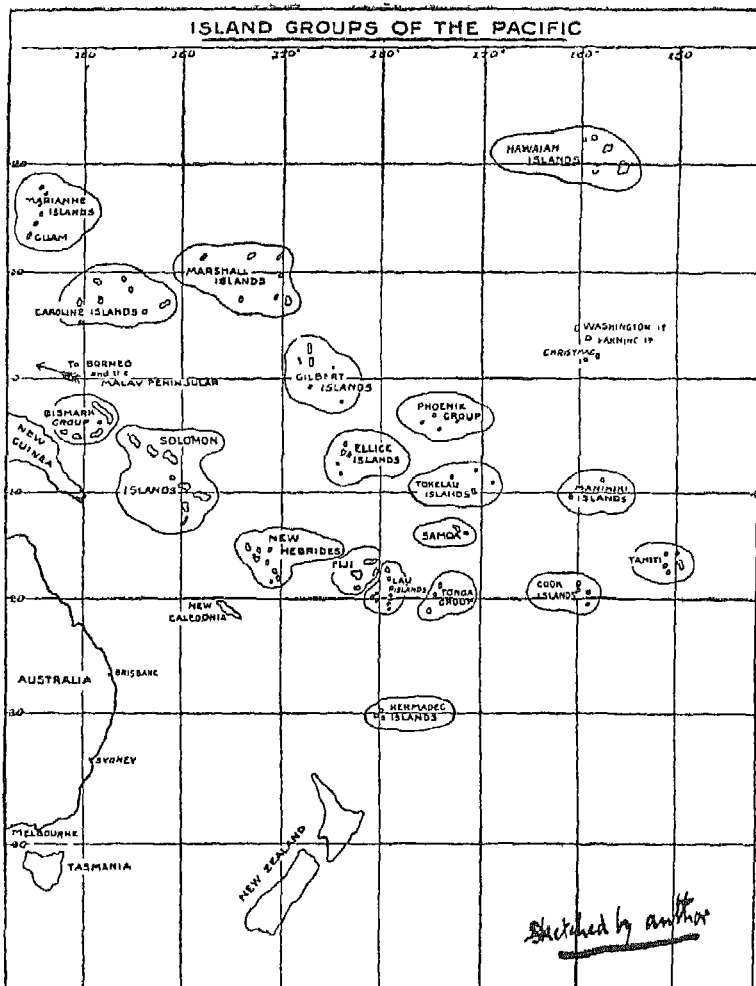


between two families ! (He likewise pasted up a tariff as to the price per dozen at which his overseers might take oysters and prawns out of the lagoon which bordered one side of the island.) Imagine my surprise, then, when one day after I had been holding a Magistrate's Court ashore at Mango I returned to the *Annandale*, and, hearing a subdued cackling and scuffling coming from an old packing-case on deck, looked in and discovered a turkey.

I thought of Dickens' *Christmas Carol* and all the other pretty stories of sudden fits of generosity, when to my horror the Fijian mate, Isei, innocently replied to my inquiries with what I could swear almost amounted to a wink, "Turaga, vosota. . . . O koya sa dua ga na tataki keitou sa kunea mai matasau" ("Be not angry, Lord, 'tis only a turkey that we happened to see on the beach"). I had to explain gently that I was not the captain of a gang of bandits on wild adventure bent, but a respectable Magistrate just returned from giving out the law ; and so the turkey was conveyed back to the island with all speed. But I know that the crew felt that a certain poetic justice might have been met by a good feast on deck and no questions asked !



# ISLAND GROUPS OF THE PACIFIC





## CHAPTER VI

### THE ORIENTAL IN THE SOUTH SEAS

MANGO was not the only island where trouble was experienced with the Indians, and indeed in Suva itself there were somewhat serious disorders in 1920 ; but, as I have said before, considering the class of labourer that India used to send out, Fiji has been singularly free from disturbances by its immigrant population. Isolated cases occurred, of course, such as the famous attempted murder by Kalu at Naitauba Island, and the subsequent running battle between him and his master, when first one and then the other became the hunted one.

I was seated quietly at breakfast one morning when a planter named Hennings (son of the William Hennings mentioned in the last chapter), who owned Naitauba Island,<sup>1</sup> came in to say that he had to charge one

<sup>1</sup> This island, also, has had a strange history. Like Mango, it was sold by the Chief Qolea to spite the local inhabitants. The firm of Moore & Co. of Samoa bought it, but in this case the natives were not first removed, and they promptly killed the new manager. Thompson, the eccentric hermit, succeeded him, and he only escaped by being secretly got away in a canoe by his devoted native wife. Then Qolea withdrew the natives, and Moore sold it to the Chamberlain Brothers, of whom the famous Joseph was one. They held it for some years, and it may have been the possession of this property that first brought home to that great statesman the far-flung nature of the British Empire. . . . Then for a long time tragedy brooded over the place, and misfortunes, sudden deaths, and suicides seem to have been a common fate of the whites who lived there ; but now the cloud has lifted, and a reign of prosperity has taken its place.



of his Indians with attempting to kill him, and would I go over and try the case on the spot, when I should have a better chance of understanding all that had taken place. This meant that I should have to travel in a little half-decked boat (for the *Anmandale* was away at the time) for some forty miles across open and possibly dangerous seas to reach my destination; but such things have to be all in the day's work for an isolated District Commissioner. As luck had it, on this occasion we were almost becalmed,—more exasperating, I always used to think, than to have to face a gale,—and we took over twenty hours to do the journey.

On arrival I proceeded to take the evidence and also to examine the scene of the "battle," a most extraordinary sight, for the coconut trees were perforated by bullets in all directions. It appeared that Kalu was the house-boy, an excellent servant, but afflicted with a violent temper when roused. He had had various quarrels with a Tongan woman servant, who had at last accused him of stealing, and reported it to the master. Kalu's box was searched, and there were the missing articles. For this he was severely reprimanded and threatened with gaol. From other evidence I think there was really no doubt that he *had* stolen them, but whether he had or not, he had evidently nursed a grievance against his master, and had deliberately taken a rifle and some fifty rounds of ball cartridge and proceeded to do his best to put him out of the world.

The first intimation Hennings had was when a bullet crashed through the wooden wall of his bungalow about an inch from his head. He grasped the situation at once, saw that his rifle was missing from the corner, but luckily having another one locked away he seized it, and, dropping



into shelter behind the stone foundation of his house, he called out a warning to Kalu to put down his weapon at once, or he would fire in return and kill him. He also told the overseer and some of the Melanesian labourers to go round and try and surprise Kalu in the rear. The only answer was another shot from Kalu, this time from higher up the hillside, where he had ensconced himself behind the bole of a coconut tree. Kalu also had noticed the movement of the other men, and took a pot-shot at one of them, the bullet going right through the front of his singlet as it swung loose while the man was stooping down running. This man was a Solomon Islander, and he was so incensed that he straightway went into the bush and cut sticks to make himself bows and arrows with, going to the overseer for some cord to complete his bow ! Hennings, who was in the local Volunteer Corps, realized that the only way to settle the business was to try and wing his man, so he then took a shot in return, immediately running up behind a tree and dropping prone in its shelter. Kalu, who was a Punjaubi, and who had been a marksman in the Indian Army, then dashed away to the left and also dropped behind another tree ; and so the fight went on, each party moving round in a circle to try and get a clear shot at the other.

This went on for an hour or two, Kalu getting a chip out of the lobe of one ear, but Hennings coming through unscathed, till dusk fell ; and at last Hennings, who had plenty of nerve, decided that it was too dark to do anything further in the shooting line, and so went back to his bungalow for dinner, taking the precaution, however, to move the light away from the dinner-table and to post a ring of sentries round the house. He also got some of Kalu's fellow Indians to go out and try and reason with him from



a distance, and somewhat to his surprise a little later Kalu was brought in, his temper having evaporated, and having been persuaded by the Indians to lay down his rifle.

Hennings had him locked up for the night, and next morning, to show Kalu that he did not fear him, he ordered him to wait at the breakfast table as usual, a rather foolhardy proceeding, I thought, as the man might be behind his back with a bread-knife at any moment. Hennings asked me to deal as gently with him as I could, but of course the matter was out of my hands, as, owing to the nature of the offence, I could only commit him for trial by the Chief Justice at the Supreme Court, where he eventually received a sentence of four years' imprisonment. A plea concerning his mental condition was raised by the defence, but there was at the time nothing to uphold it.

The sequel was that Kalu brooded and brooded in Suva Gaol, and the desire to get at Hennings became an obsession with him. He declared that he would get back to Naitaubu in spite of everybody, and he escaped from gaol time after time, but was always caught before he had got very far; though on one occasion he reached Levuka in a steamer, and was captured there *disguised in a coat and trousers and a bowler hat!* The unfortunate man was flogged for breaking gaol and flogged for assaulting his warders, was kept in solitary confinement, was handcuffed, but he still persisted. On the last occasion he nearly broke through a solid stone cell in a very ingenious way. When night fell he took the bucket that was in his cell and started beating at the door and walls with it, shouting and making a terrific din. He was warned that he would be punished in the morning if he did not stop at once, but he shouted that he didn't care, and that they couldn't punish him



any worse than he had already been punished. And so he went on. At last towards morning a warder going the rounds discovered Kalu half out of a hole in the wall of his cell. His noisy shouting and beating on the wall had been merely a ruse, and under cover of it he had been diligently chipping away at the mortar with the wrenched-off handle of his bucket, dislodged some stones, and had almost succeeded in another escape.

Eventually, on the expiration of his sentence, he was deported to India, and as nothing has happened for some five years now, one can only conclude that he has decided to forget, or else has at last become a candidate for an asylum. I always felt sorry for Kalu, and I am sure that Hennings did also ; but strong-nerved as the latter was, he would hardly welcome Kalu back on Naitauba.

\* \* \* \* \*

The mentality of the Indians was at times disconcerting. Blind rages would sometimes seize them, comparable to the running amok of the Malay, especially where their women-folk were concerned ; and on such occasions murder and mutilation was the order of the day. A favourite act was to cut off the unfaithful wife's breasts and nose as a sign of the reason for killing her. At various times I had to conduct post-mortems where some remarkable cases of mutilations were concerned, but such things are only fitting for a medical treatise, and I cannot describe them here.

The strangest way in which I was ever called upon to examine a body occurred one night at Lomaloma. I was aroused from sleep by a Fijian tapping at the wall of my bungalow, and on my asking what was the matter, the man, whom I knew, replied mysteriously that he



would tell me when I got outside, as he did not want to alarm my wife. I hurriedly dressed and followed the still silent man, who, carrying a lantern, led me through my garden and across the road down to the beach. There lay a rowing-boat, in which, he told me, he had just come over from Munia Island (about ten miles away, but within the great lagoon, and where a neighbouring planter had his estate). In the shadows I saw what I took to be a sack of copra, but the Fijian slowly lifted some canvas and saying, solemnly, "There, sir, this is what I have brought you from my master," revealed the corpse of an Indian! He then proceeded to give me a letter, which explained the mystery. The Indian had died from sunstroke that morning, and the planter, knowing that an inquest might be wanted, and also that by the time a message had reached me and in response I had travelled over to Munia the body (it was the hot season) might have become too decomposed to render a satisfactory examination possible, had thoughtfully sent the corpse over to me. It was well meant, but it was certainly the first time I had ever been awakened at night to receive the present of a corpse.

To a Fijian, with his huge mop of hair, sunstroke,—like many other complaints of weak civilized man,—is unknown, and he is apt to regard the thin-legged, turban-wearing Indian as a poor and effeminate creature. "Insects, wretched centipedes!" I once heard a Fijian chief contemptuously call them. On the other hand, the Indians look on the Fijians as rough "Jungle-men," so all is square. Intermarriage seldom takes place, though once in the Singatoka district I had to bring into the world a baby whose father was the son of a Chinaman and a Samoan woman, and whose mother was the daughter of an Indian



and a Fijian woman. He will be some day an interesting practical joke to plant on a learned Anthropological Society for head-measuring.

Not only do the Indians refrain from intermarrying with the Fijians, but, except for odd storekeepers who settle in native villages, they do not much mingle with the everyday life of the indigenous native. In fact, as I have said before, the Indian settlements might be a little bit of India transplanted straight to Fiji. And never is this more marked than at the time of some festival, such as the Tajia, when the Indians assemble in their thousands from all directions, dressed out in their finest clothes and jewellery, and eagerly clustering round the great pagodo-like structure that has been temporarily erected in honour of the day.

It is a recognized thing on these occasions to scatter a purple-coloured scented water over all and sundry. This, of course, refers only to their own people, though occasionally a well-known Indian storekeeper might in hesitating jest take the same liberty with one of the junior white employees of the Company. Imagine the feelings of the senior officials of the Civil Service when a certain Governor, apparently considering that it was politic to give practical proof to our brown brothers that equality and fraternity were no empty words, allowed himself to be solemnly squirted with the purple dye!

I once happened to call in at Ciccia Island when the Tajia was being celebrated by the Indian labourers there. As I approached the coolie lines at dusk my ears were greeted by a wild and continuous beating of tomtoms and the sound of much shouting and applause. A ring had been formed round two lithe and almost nude figures, who were wrestling by torchlight in true Indian style,



periods of breathless interest on the part of the spectators being punctuated by bursts of applause or groans of dismay as they saw their money doubling itself or else disappearing, for they are all born gamblers.

When the bout was finished a man jumped into the ring with a long firestick in each hand and started slowly twirling them round and round, in a sort of rhythm to the tomtoms. Then he shouted something, and another brand was passed to him which he clenched in his teeth, with his head bent back. As the speed of the tomtoms increased, so did he himself whirl round, keeping the torches in his hands also revolving like two great wheels, one on each side of him. The onlookers swayed backwards and forwards, all clapping their hands in time to the music; and the whole scene gave one a weird sensation of unreality as one watched the living rings of fire whirling and dancing in the shadows to the sound of the throbbing drum-taps.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Chinese settlements in Fiji are equally interesting to study, though on the surface not so obviously picturesque and bizarre. It is only when one is permitted to see something of the home-life of the better class Chinese that one realizes what good citizens they really are. It was my good fortune to be stationed as a doctor for a year or so on the Singatoka River at the time when the great Chinese-owned banana plantations were in full swing, and I was therefore brought into touch with the local managers and also with the head men who came down periodically from China to inspect the business.

By arrangement I used to ride out to the chief plantation, some twenty-four miles up the river, once a month



to make a routine medical examination of all the labourers, for the managers were wise enough to realize how the best results can always be obtained from the healthiest men. The labourers were, of course, Chinese coolies of the ordinary agricultural type, but the managers were educated men, that is to say educated in the Chinese way, for they had never previously been out of China, and could only speak a few words of English that they had picked up on the voyage.

The house of Ah Chow, the head manager, was a somewhat primitive bungalow as to shape and size, as was only natural when one remembered that the new plantations had practically broken virgin soil, and that this was the farthest point up the river where any sort of timber dwelling stood ; but it was well and skilfully put together ; and the door and window-frames might have been cut out of a single piece of wood, so neatly was the joining done ; but this I have always found to be the case in Chinese carpentry. Outside, in the little bamboo stockade, were ducks and fowls in great numbers ; small artificial watercourses and a concrete pond for the ducks ; and rows of little houses, each with a sloping platform leading up to it, for the fowls.

I shall never forget the first occasion (after I had been visiting the plantation for some time, and had apparently passed muster) that I was introduced to Mrs. Ah Chow and her small daughter, aged five. Madame was a smiling little lady, very slight and small, her boyish appearance accentuated by the fact that she wore loose black satin trousers. She had a black satin jacket edged with red silk embroidery, and fastened by beautiful red carved stone buttons, and a pair of richly brocaded tiny shoes covered her cruelly deformed little feet. As



she could not even speak a word of English, and the few words of Chinese that I had so far picked up were all after the style of "Where is the pain?" . . . "Have you had this cough for a long time?" . . . "I want my horse saddled now" . . . the conversation seemed somehow to languish; but she was very hospitable, nevertheless, and led me into the dining-room, where a sumptuous luncheon was spread out, but with only one place laid.

Ah Chow asked me to be seated, but it was only after much persuasion that I could get him to join me at the table, while Mrs. Ah Chow excused herself on the score of having to superintend operations in the background; and I did not press the matter, not knowing what the custom was. Servants brought in course after course, luckily only in minute portions, all in beautiful little white porcelain bowls, and I tasted here and there, Ah Chow explaining to me in a mixture of broken English and Fijian what the dishes consisted of. He also provided me with a fork and spoon, as the chopsticks, after a vain struggle, I had reluctantly to set aside. I remember that we had, among the many dishes, fragments of stewed duck, square dice of pork, slices of *bêche-de-mer*, the inevitable "chop suey," and,—as a *pièce de résistance*,—some birds' nest soup. Ginger, and some curious dried fruits, finished up the strange meal, and accompanying these some little pink bowls of Chinese wine, which I thought particularly nasty, but which Ah Chow seemed to relish, and which, through politeness, I pretended to like. The result was that when the Chinese New Year came, a few weeks later, there came to my house a Chinaman staggering under a load of two baskets, one at each end of a bamboo pole, and from these he took out and



laid in a row on my verandah three bottles of the wretched wine, a large and much more appreciated jar of preserved ginger, a square rush basket of lichees, some dried bêche-de-mer, and a tin of special China tea;—all with the compliments of Ah Chow! I did not like to refuse the gift, so I sent him in return some burgundy, some Scotch whiskey (which I happened to know was not unacceptable to him), and a tin of Egyptian cigarettes, which he probably burned to his Joss.

Things Scottish seem to have a peculiar fascination for the Chinese. I feel sure they would appreciate a haggis,—just as perhaps my Scottish ancestry made me understand a chop suey,—while the sound of the bagpipes must make them think they are back in the Flowery Land, listening to the sweet strains of a Chinese orchestra! The most incongruous thing I ever heard, however, was one day when I was travelling on the little interinsular steamer *Amra*. Ming Ting, the portly, affable, and wealthy Chinese merchant of Suva, was on board with his wife, (his “travelling” wife, as the other always stayed at home to look after the interests of the house), and presently, after some request from him in Chinese, the lady sat down to the little cracked piano that stood in an alley-way on deck and obliged us with “Annie Laurie,” Ming Ting standing by and positively beaming with pride through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

Ming Ting’s reputation stood high in the commercial world, and many large transactions passed through his counting-house, where I used to see the clerks busily sliding the beads of the abacus up and down its wires and recording the results in a ledger with a brush pen in Chinese ink. But Chinese integrity—on certain lines—is proverbial, and I have been told that in some of the



business houses in Japan they actually put a Chinaman in as cashier to keep their accounts!

Japanese traders were beginning to come in to Fiji in large numbers before I left, a "peaceful penetration" which is gradually spreading through the Pacific. The first that came were the trochus dealers, the cause of a new export trade arising in Fiji. Japan discovered that she required "mother-of-pearl" in large quantities, not only for all the fancy inlay work for which she is so famous, but also for a great industry in pearl buttons—from small glove buttons to the coster's "pearly"—which she was building up to compete against the old wasteful methods of England and other nations. (By the way, I was once told that there are enough pearl-shells,—from which only one or two buttons have been punched, and the rest wastefully discarded,—beneath the foundations of the Birmingham Town Hall to pay almost for the cost of pulling it down and re-erecting it.)

So Japan sent out to the South Seas to buy up the trochus or "top-shell," which there grows to a great size and has a beautiful iridescent nacre inside it not found in colder waters. This shell, as its name (from the Greek "trochos," a wheel) implies, is circular at the base and rises to a cone, a brown and white univalve. When the mollusc inside retires to sleep he pulls to, as a door, his "operculum," a smooth, hemispherical, green and white stone, like an "eye," which jewellers mount as fancy buttons, ladies' hat-pins, brooches, etc. By grinding away the conc, from the apex downwards, until only the polished ring of the base is left, the Fijian makes for himself a pearly armlet, still occasionally to be seen among the Singatoka men.

The first intimation I had of the new trade was when



I saw a cargo of the shell being loaded into the good steamship *Ripple*, the quaintest little oddity of an ancient coasting tramp (less than 100 tons burthen, with a funnel like an attenuated stove-pipe and a whistle to match) that I ever saw. But the steamer, like her captain, was a veritable little ray of sunshine to the lonely settler as she rolled into view, bearing his long awaited supplies and mails.

"Little Tom Lippet," as her skipper once told me he was known to them all, would sit on deck in the moonlight nights while the ship was at anchor and play old-fashioned airs on the banjo, airs reminiscent of home that almost brought tears to the eyes of the exiled traders who had come aboard to smoke and yarn and listen to news from the outside world. He has now achieved the ambition of every sea-captain, and become a farmer on Gau Island. Long may he prosper!

As a rule the Japanese only sent their buyers to deal in the shell which had been fished among the island reefs by the natives (one of the few kinds of "work" that the native has any relish for, as it is regarded as one continuous playtime, laughing and diving and joking as they seek out their treasures among the grottoes of the fairyland below). But on one occasion a small 10-ton ketch wandered all across the Pacific from Japan with Japanese divers on board, and, having arrived as far as Fiji, incontinently became a wreck on the first reef she came in touch with. Her master came to me to report the matter, and then proceeded in excellent English to discuss the intricacies of the salvage law!

They are certainly a wonderful nation, sometimes, one is apt to think, a little too wonderful. A planter on a neighbouring island picked up in Suva what he thought



was a tremendous bargain, a Japanese servant who was the best of valets, and who agreed to serve for some 30s. a month. But one day there was a letter in the mail-bag for his retainer, and the planter, having to pass that way, took it to the servant's room. And there he found his 30s. Jap surrounded by mathematical instruments and pouring over big charts of all the soundings and harbours of the local waters! Unfortunately, by the time I had heard of this the man had bolted, but I feel sure he was more used to the quarter-deck than to the servants' hall.

But in those pre-war days I am afraid no one much considered the question of guarding our secrets, and I remember a very thorough and outspoken German who, of all trades and professions, was licensed to practise all over the country as a surveyor!

The Germans in Samoa were the nearest white neighbours of Fiji, and from all accounts the natives there had no love for the intruders. In some of the schools the only "foreign" history allowed was German; and the children, although their parents had had long previous intercourse with the English, were punished if they were caught speaking in that hated tongue. It was no wonder that the Samoans welcomed the return of their English friends. As the "next-door group," it was only natural to find many natives from it coming to pay visits to Fiji, and many also took up permanent residence there. Like the Chinaman when he gets to a foreign country, the occupation of washerwoman,—or rather washerman,—seems to have a great attraction for the Samoan, and much of this particular business in Suva is carried on by them. They are also found to be very trustworthy as warders at the gaol and attendants at the lunatic asylum ;



and these big, handsome men can often be seen striding along in their blue uniforms through the town when they happen to be off duty.

The Samoan girls are said to be some of the most beautiful in the South Seas, though—like most native races—they grow old sooner than their white sisters. There is a peculiar institution in Samoa, the office of Taupo girl, and the holder of it has to take a leading part in all the public ceremonies and dances. She is usually of chiefly rank and unblemished character, is always the most beautiful maiden in the district, and is on such occasions carefully oiled and decked out with garlands of flowers, variegated leaves, glittering pearl-shell, and the valuable flax mats for which Samoa is famous.

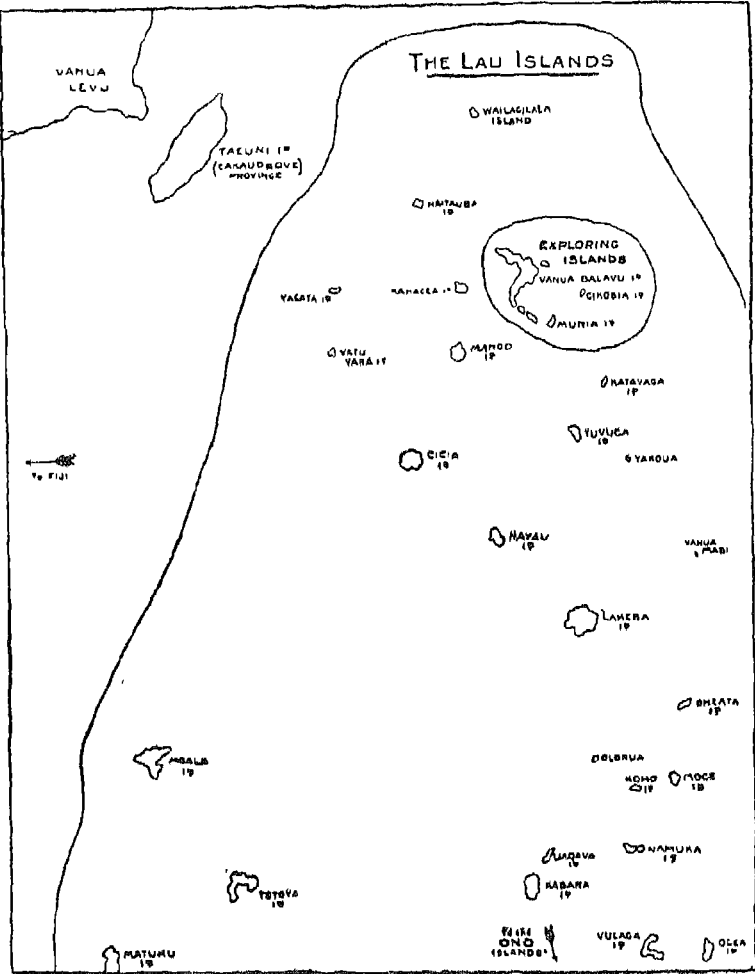
Another peculiar custom on public occasions is to have a professional orator to represent each district, and who alone does all the talking necessary,—a lesson to some of our parish councils ! He always carries a long staff, which probably in the ancient days was a spear ; for the spear and club, and a sort of wooden sword, are practically the only weapons that the Samoans had until the white man taught them the use of the musket.

The “swords,” somewhat after the shape of an old Roman broadsword, were beautifully made of hard and heavy wood, smoothly polished, and often set with sharks’ teeth along the edge. Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, “of the Falklands,” once showed me a very fine specimen that was among the treasures presented to him by the late King Malietoa. By a curious coincidence I happened at the time to possess a large feather-embroidered mat which also came from King Malietoa, and which I subsequently gave to the Public Museum at the Falklands, when I was stationed in that Colony.



“ Kingdoms ” in Polynesia are now a thing of the past, with the exception of that of Tonga, but some recollections of native royalty (though I am afraid I cannot head them, like a famous novelist is alleged to have done, as “ kings I have dined with ”) I will give in the next chapter.







## CHAPTER VII

### “ OF CABBAGES AND KINGS ”

As I have explained in a former book,<sup>1</sup> “ the divine right of kings ” was a very real thing in Polynesia, where monarchs held absolute sway, even to the power of life and death, over their subjects. And though their kingdoms were small ones in comparison with those of Europe, they were nevertheless “ kingdoms ” in the true sense of the word. Therefore when the white man of the late Georgian era came along and talked very grandly about the ceremonies at Court in his own country (this to kings whose ceremonies and rigid etiquette dated back for perhaps 2,000 years), they were in many cases persuaded to add some of the procedure which, they were informed, was essential if they were also to be regarded as brother kings by monarchs of the European world. It was thus that the King of Hawaii established an Order of Knighthood (he had already a centuries-old order of nobility, the Ali 'i) and gave sundry of his white officials the accolade,—history does not relate whether he used a sword or a club,—among them being Chief Justice St. Julian, henceforth to be known as Sir Charles St. Julian, the father of the present Postmaster of Fiji.

Among the old nobility of Hawaii, as in that of all other Polynesian groups, pride of race was an ever-present

<sup>1</sup> *The Islanders of the Pacific*, 1921.



factor, and the deeds of the valiant and fighting ancestors they had sprung from were proudly told in verse and song. Which reminds one rather of the tale of the two Irishmen who were having a bit of a row. Said one of them, "Ye're a mighty proud lad, Pat O'Grady, but phwat was your family sprung from, anyway?" To which the other indignantly replied, "I'll have ye to know that the O'Gradys don't spring from *anybody*, they spring at 'em!" . . .

In Samoa there were two chief lines of nobility, and the head of each at various times claimed the kingship. At the close of the seventies my uncle, then a young novelist roaming through the Pacific in search of "local colour" and on adventure bent, became very friendly with Tamasese, the rival chief; while at the same time, being a man who had a gift for making friends wherever he went, he was on very good terms with the party of the actual King, Malietoa. As a partial consequence of this there was shortly afterwards a mutual "burying of the hatchet"—or, rather, of the musket and spear—and by the consent of the three European Powers interested in Samoa, viz. Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, Malietoa was confirmed and recognized as King, and Tamasese given the somewhat extraordinary title of Vice-King!

Sir Hercules Robinson, who was then, from his seat of government in New South Wales, keeping an eye on British interests in the Pacific, tried to persuade my uncle to take up an appointment as a sort of British adviser to King Malietoa; and had he accepted he might have done much to alter the trend of affairs in that part of the world, for he would undoubtedly have been able to smooth over many of the quarrels that subsequently



occurred, and thereby to help the King to hold his own. . . . [But family affairs called him home, and his stay in Samoa was not a long one. He died while still a young man, and before his name was made; but I cannot help thinking that his picturesque descriptions of Samoan life may have helped to influence Robert Louis Stevenson to visit Samoa, and ultimately settle there.] . . . As it was, the Germans gradually undermined Malietoa's supremacy, and at last had the unfortunate King deported to German West Africa (and later the Marshall Islands), just as they subsequently did with his lieutenant, the famous Mata'afu. And owing to all this "back-kitchen politics" Germany became so strong in Samoa that Great Britain eventually, in 1899, renounced all her rights there, and for nearly twenty years Germany reigned supreme (with the exception of the small depôt on Pangopango Island held by the United States); only to receive a rude awakening when, in 1914, the troopships with the New Zealanders on board steamed into Apia harbour and once more planted the Union Jack on shore.

\* \* \* \* \*

In Tonga (spelt Toga by the natives) the Germans were not so successful, though they made many attempts to win over the old King; and the present ex-Kaiser, when a young man, even went so far as to send him a yacht—a highly prized gift to any Pacific Islander, for they all love the sea. This little craft, called the *Lelo*, was afterwards passed on by the King to the great Ma'afu,<sup>1</sup> who became his Viceroy in the conquered Lau Islands, and of whom I shall have more to say later; and when these

<sup>1</sup> This was Ma'afu the Tongan, and not to be confused with Mata'afu the Samoan.



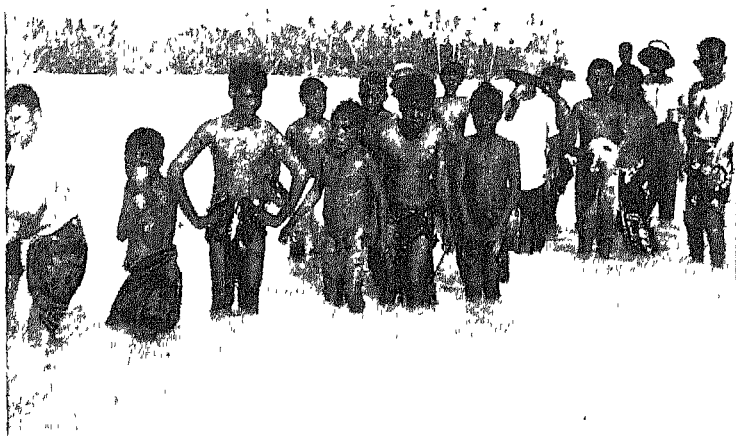
islands (of which I was subsequently Commissioner) finally came under British rule, some of my predecessors frequently used her to travel about the district in.

Instead of falling under German influence, and becoming a mere “colony” of that nation, as Samoa had done, Tonga has retained her sovereignty as an independent kingdom, though for her own safety she has, by a treaty arranged by Mr. (now Sir) Basil Thomson in 1900, placed herself under British protection, and a British Agent and Consul (Mr. McOwan is the present one) is stationed there. Little Tonga is very proud of her nationhood and her place in the world’s politics; in fact, as long ago as the Franco-Prussian War she made haste to publish the fact that “in this war Tonga will remain strictly neutral”! In the recent war, however, she showed her loyalty to Great Britain not only by gifts of money, but by sending a contingent of native Tongans to the front to help her big friend.

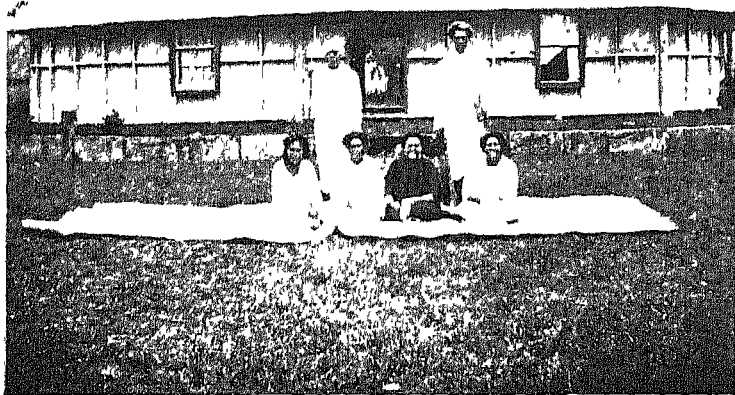
And so the Tongans have modelled their newly made constitution on that of ancient England; and there is the Sovereign, the Privy Council, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. The present Queen, who was born in 1900, only came to the throne at the age of eighteen (as did our own Victoria); her portrait may be seen on the Tongan postage stamps, as was also that of the late King, George II, her father.

On page 208 there is shown a very interesting facsimile copy of the 1921 “Budget” or Estimates, giving the salaries of the different officials, from the Queen downwards. It will be seen that while Her Majesty does very well on £2,000 a year, the Speaker of the House gets only £60, and the Sergeant-at-Arms is passing rich on £5 a year! (Perhaps his emoluments are helped out by grateful,





BROWN CHILDREN AT PLAY.



GROUP OF TONGANS.







though contumacious, Members whom he has dropped with care and tenderness when it has become his painful duty to throw them out of the House.)

It will also be noticed that in far more up-to-date Tonga the members of the House of Lords or Nobles are also paid, as well as the mere Representatives of the People. A useful tip for our "new-poor" aristocracy. The pay is not excessive, it is true, but an Earl or a Duke in Tonga can evidently do himself pretty well on £80 a year.

The Premier is the big man there, and draws the princely salary of £650,—to say nothing of a house allowance of £48,—but then he is Premier, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chief Collector of Customs, Postmaster-General, and Minister of Education,—obviously no idler, and I am sure he deserves all he gets !

In addition there is an "Assistant-Premier," a white man. When I left the Pacific a year or two ago the holder of that office was, and probably still is, a Mr. Roberts, whom I knew in Fiji. He used to tell me amusing tales of how the late King, when he felt at all bored on a wet day, would retire to his study with Roberts and some brandies and soda, and there devise new "Orders and Decorations," with high-sounding titles. Roberts on various occasions, with that facetiousness which would not ill become his great namesake Arthur, suggested the "Noble Order of the Green Coconut"; the "Eminent Order of the Yellow Banana," etc., but I did not hear which were adopted. Anyhow, the next step was always to send to London to have the precious insignia made up, not in diamonds and gold, as the reader may perhaps be thinking, but in what was *nearly as good*, crystals and silver-gilt ! . . . The King would then, very naturally, present himself with the best specimen of each, and a few



of them may be seen decorating his ample bosom (he weighed 26 stone) on his postage stamps.

Just before I finally left, in 1917, the King was coming over to visit my group, the Lau Islands, which were the nearest part of Fiji to his own territory, and where there has always been a large colony of Tongans. As it would have fallen to me to put him up, I could quite see looming in the distance the Order of the Green Coconut at the very least; but, alas! circumstances prevented the visit, and my chance was lost for ever.

But anything of that sort would have been very well earned, for only people with the strongest heads could entertain, or be entertained by, His Majesty. The order of the day, at a Royal Reception in Tonga, was, I was informed, alternate rounds of brandy and sweet champagne, carried round on large trays by the attendants, to the strains of the Royal Brass Band, and also the Military Drum and Fife Band, playing very well, but different tunes, from each end of the verandah. Right well indeed does the Tongan hospitality of to-day bear out the original name given to the group—and still seen on many maps—of "The Friendly Isles"; though historians tell us that this was given under a misapprehension, inasmuch as it was really only an unforeseen occurrence that prevented the massacre of Captain Cook and all his party while there.

A friend has given me a picture of the portly King going in solemn procession in his scarlet and rather tight-fitting uniform, accompanied by "the Nobles," to the official opening of Parliament, and it must indeed have been a grand spectacle. The "Army"—at times I believe there were nearly a dozen—lined up at the exit of the Palace, and then dashed off quickly by a short cut to



reappear at the entrance to the House of Assembly (rather like a "fit-up" Shakespear performance). All had ancient rifles (Mr. G. V. Maxwell, late Lands Commissioner of Fiji, and now head of the Native Department of Kenya, told me that on one occasion when he was there these weapons were shown to him with pride as having "real rifling," but that he was unfortunately unable to verify this on looking through the barrels, as no daylight could be seen), and those that had a uniform were placed in the front rank, so that there was really quite a good show, somewhat marred by one worried soldier who had taken off a pinching boot. But the proceedings in "The House" went swimmingly, and all the necessary Government measures were carried without a hitch, for was there not an enormous feast of turtles, pigs, and yams waiting outside for the Members, at the Government expense? I felt sure that the foregoing description must have been,—well, a little highly coloured; but after seeing the 1921 Budget in cold print one can believe much. After all, circumstances alter things, and what might seem ludicrous in Westminster may be very natural in Tonga.

It is perhaps a pity that Tonga has jumped at civilization with a leap instead of quietly walking there. For there is much that is good in the Tongan, as I can testify after ten years close association with them in Lau, and it only requires being properly brought to the surface. There is no doubt that they are a highly intelligent and clever people; and, given a solid groundwork of education and a good example, they might achieve much. I had for some time in the Lau Islands a Tongan clerk named Malachi (like the Fijians, they are fond of Biblical names), and he, at the age of sixteen, had won the highest



certificate for shorthand at one of the open competitions in New Zealand, besides speaking three languages fluently.

But, like the "Parliament" business, they are also inclined to run before they can walk where educational matters are concerned, and in their local "College," a very small affair really, they have instituted "Degrees" and placed the students in cap and gown; so that I have seen Tongan visitors to my group appearing on official occasions dressed only in a shirt and the usual South Sea waist-cloth, and with no boots and stockings, yet superimposed on this simple attire a "mortar-board" and silk gown, as a Doctor of Divinity or a Doctor of Music! I think, however, that of late years they have had men with more common-sense at the head of affairs, and such fantastic things are now to a large extent being checked.

Man for man, they are taller than the Fijian (in fact, they are the tallest people in the Pacific, and perhaps the tallest in the world), and also well set up, but I do not think that physically they are any stronger than the natives of Fiji. It was just this higher intelligence and able leadership that carried them forward victoriously when they swept across, about a hundred years ago, from Tonga and swarmed over the Lau Islands and eastern Fiji. A generation later they consolidated their power in Lau, and Tubou—King George I—appointed Ma'afu to be his Viceroy (in reality he was very glad to get rid of a powerful rival) for that group.

Ma'afu was one of those rare men whose genius puts them beyond the bounds of nationality, colour, or race. Had he had from infancy the opportunities of a white child, instead of being born merely a brown baby on a South Sea island, he might easily have become a second Napoleon, or perhaps a Rhodes, for his genius lay rather



in administration and statecraft than in actual warfare. Nevertheless, his skill as a General was amply proved, and stronghold after stronghold of the Fijians, a people highly skilled in fortress-building, fell to his strategy. He also made a study of open manœuvres in the field, an unusual mode of warfare in the South Seas, and his bringing a division at the critical moment in the fight at Kaba was up perhaps the turning-point of the day. At sea, too, he was equally fond of fighting, and he was the first to foresee the possibilities of cannon on the big war-canoes, a factor which made his flotilla all-conquering. Yet despite all this he always tried where possible to strengthen his position by methods of conciliation, as was shown time after time, rather than by having recourse to force.

His first lessons in diplomacy were learnt at the "Court,"—if one may use the expression,—of Taleai Tupou, the old King of Lau, who lived at Lakemba Island, and whose official title was Tui Nayau.<sup>1</sup>

"Lau" at this time consisted only of the islands in the neighbourhood of Lakemba, and neither the northern islands (Vanua Balavu, Thithia, Mango, etc.) nor the western islands (Moala Group) were as yet federated with it. The royal families of Tonga and of Lau had inter-married some generations before, and had been in the habit of exchanging young chiefs of high rank to act as A.D.Cs., and in this way Ma'afu, son of a former Tongan King, Leamotua, was sent over to Lau. Taleai Tupou was weak, indolent, and old, and very soon the vigorous and intelligent young Ma'afu began to gather the power into his own hands, becoming in a few years practically Regent, a king in all but name. But already he viewed

<sup>1</sup> The reason for the title of Tui Nayau I have explained in a former book, *The Lau Islands*, 1918.



things with a wider vision, and was casting his eyes on a larger empire.

His first chance came, as it did centuries before with some of the great adventurers in the days of Rome, through the use of Christianity as a pawn in politics. Tonga and the Tongans had been christianized some time before, and by the time Ma'afu took up his abode in Lau it was just beginning to spread through that group and the adjacent islands. Totoya had been "converted," but Moala and Matuku remained stubborn. Ma'afu said he would "see into this," and taking a strong force of Tongans down he made friends with the Totoyans "in a common cause," and with their help fell on the people of Moala and Matuku, successfully "converting" the same day any that had not been killed or escaped. Being now free from any danger from his late foes, it was an easy matter to overawe his late allies, and without further bloodshed the whole group fell into his hands.

Soon after this, Tui Thakau, the King of Thakaundrove, and also of the "northern islands" already mentioned, visited Lau to try and procure one of the big war-canoes, for the making of which that group had almost a monopoly. Old Taleai Tupou was unable to oblige him, but Ma'afu promptly gave him his own. Moved by this generosity (and no doubt deeming it prudent to secure as a friend so successful a warrior) Tui Thakau in return gave to Ma'afu the sovereignty over these northern islands, over which—it was no secret—he had much trouble to maintain his own authority.

With this new accession of power Ma'afu found the time was ripe to throw off all pretence, and shortly afterwards Taleai Tupou formally abdicated, Ma'afu taking the comprehensive title of "Tui Lau" (King of Lau),



and indicating that Lau was now to be taken as meaning the whole of the twenty-seven islands, spread through 30,000 square miles of ocean, which to this day still form the group.

He then set to work to put his house in order, and organized a proper system of revenue through equally distributed taxation; an efficient magistracy and police force; and, above all, an opening up of good roads, a vital thing, as Napoleon had recognized.

He next leased out blocks of land to various Europeans who were now settling in the islands to plant cotton; and in connection with such transactions there began one of his chief difficulties, for he had never had that chance of a school education that the next generation was to have, and could barely write his own name. Nothing daunted, he proceeded to engage a white secretary, to do the actual clerical work and draw up the necessary documents; but woe betide the unfortunate secretary if anything went wrong, for Ma'afu was quite capable of keeping in his own head a mental record of all the ramifications of his business, it was merely the manual work of putting it on to paper that he was paying for.

Up to this time he had been nominally holding Lau as a sort of Viceroy for the King of Tonga, but he now felt strong enough to cut all official connection with the Tongan Government, though he remained friendly with it, and occasionally visited his old home. I remember that the day I first landed in Lau an old Tongan named Foiakau was among those who came down to welcome me, and he told me, through an interpreter, that he was Ma'afu's old captain, and had often taken Ma'afu over to Tonga *in a canoe*, and was not too old to do the same for me if I wished! As this was 200 miles of open ocean I declined with thanks.



Ma'afu next proceeded to make an alliance with his old friend Tui Thakau. This lasted for some years, till it was broken, during Ma'afu's absence on a visit to Tonga, by the indiscretion of his "Admiral," Wainiqolo, who made an unauthorized and unsuccessful coup against Thakaundrove. Ma'afu showed his supreme gift for conciliation and persuasion here, for directly he returned he went over to the stronghold of the affronted Tui Thakau in the dead of night alone in a canoe, and after a long conversation turned that chief into a warmer friend than ever; and from that moment Ma'afu began plans which resulted in the "Tovata," or great alliance, of all northern and eastern Fiji; and which was intended to upset King Thakambau and (though this part of it was as yet a secret locked in Ma'afu's brain) to place Ma'afu on the throne of an empire in the Western Pacific, embracing Tonga, Samoa, and the New Hebrides, as well as Fiji.

Ma'afu, as the leading spirit in the Lau-Thakaundrove alliance, made a treaty with the newly allied peoples of Vanua Levu (Mathuata and Bua), thus leaving King Thakambau on Viti Levu alone outside the fold. With the forces now at his command it would not have been a difficult matter to overcome any resistance that Thakambau unaided could make; and already Ma'afu had started to collect armed vessels, cannon, and munitions for his great campaign. But, unfortunately for his plans, the growing agitation of the whites (especially those who had settled within the sphere of Thakambau's influence) for a stable form of government had at last taken effect with the home authorities, and greater powers even than those of Ma'afu had begun silently to move.

Thakambau, backed up by the authority of British men-of-war, began to recover his waning influence, an



open rupture with Ma'afu was stayed, and finally Ma'afu had to yield to the inexorable pressure of white civilization and give up his dream of empire. The way it came about was this:—

Mr. R. Swanston, a former Commissioner of Samoa, was his Chief Secretary at the time; and Henry Miller (a half-caste, and the son of one of the earliest medical missionaries to Tonga,—he has told me how as a child he witnessed the defeat and death in action of Captain Croker, of H.M.S. *Favourite*, there in 1840; but that is another story) was his interpreter; and I have had the story both from Miller and from Swanston's daughter, who still lives at Lomaloma.

Ma'afu had been very worried for some time past, and paced up and down the beach alone all that day, none of his followers daring to go near him. Still he could not make up his mind. At last, in the middle of the night, he came along to Swanston's house and knocked him up, and proceeded to argue the matter all over again, looking at it from every side. He recognized that he held most of Fiji in the hollow of his hand, but only by right of conquest; and he knew that the Fijians would be only too glad to get rid of him and all the Tongans (it was the case of William the Conqueror and his Norman followers over again; indeed, on another occasion Ma'afu had actually likened himself to William the Conqueror, for though nearly illiterate, he was not unversed in history), and the Fijians could do so if only they had the backing of the whites to help them.

Swanston knew that his own job would go with Ma'afu's downfall, but he had common sense enough to know that Ma'afu could not stand up against the British Empire if it came to a question of defiance; so he told Ma'afu that he



had better give in with good grace and become one of the parties to the Deed of Cession that Thakambau and many of the chiefs were anxious to sign, but which, of course, could not be accepted by Great Britain unless it were unanimous from all Fiji. He pointed out that under Great Britain Ma'afu would still remain a high chief, but that if he remained outside, the ground would be cut away from his feet by the fact that all the rest of Fiji would be allied together, leaving him without the pale as a very minor person indeed. Ma'afu only too well knew the process and how true this was, so at last, with rather bad grace, he agreed to come in with the rest.

So Sir Hercules Robinson brought Thakambau and Tui Thakau to Lau with H.M.S. *Pearl* and *Dido*; and Ma'afu, a King to the end, insisted on receiving, in his own dominions, the first visit from Thakambau, who then accompanied him on board the *Pearl*, where the momentous deed was signed. Ma'afu subsequently witnessed, with tears in his eyes, his flag, the famous red and white, with a cross upon it, lowered at his headquarters and the Union Jack run up instead.

He was afterwards made Governor of Lau under the British Government, receiving a nominal salary of £600 a year, though he had, of course, his own large estates, which still brought him in a good revenue. Yet he also spent royally, and I believe died in debt. I have an original of one of his salary receipts for January 1876, witnessed by G. R. Le Hunte, a young magistrate who was then stationed in Lau. This young magistrate is now Sir George Le Hunte, G.C.M.G., one of our great colonial administrators, and lately Governor of South Australia and of Trinidad. He has often told me how highly he regarded Ma'afu, who was never petty or small,



even after the days of his glory were past. Apropos of Ma'afu waking his secretary Swanston up at night, a thing among South Sea natives that can only be done for a matter of life or death, and hardly that, Sir George Le Hunte once wrote to me describing how on one occasion he, Sir George, had woken up Ma'afu; but I will give it in his own words :—

. . . Ma'afu and I were great friends. I had a very sincere regard for him, and he was a most able and charming man, though he could be very "cross" at times. I incurred his wrath once at one of the big annual Bose's of Chiefs in Vanua Levu. (The annual Councils. This was in Ma'afu's later days, under the British Government.) I woke him up from his siesta to tell him that I had won the big sailing-canoe race for him in his canoe which I piloted, by insisting on its going round the course, the others, or most of them, went inside the marks and were disqualified. There was a lot of grumbling afterwards that it was a "Kai Papalangi" (foreign) interference with the native rights to disregard the rules of the race. . . . Instead of being pleased, the old chief was as sulky as a bear with a sore head at my breach of etiquette in disturbing his slumbers—which it was—but I thought the event justified it! . . .

The "Gauna Ma'afu" (the time of Ma'afu) is still remembered as the golden age in Lau, and among the natives gives a date for a generation or so, just as the "Misili" (the measles) gives a date for a particular year, the dread year of 1875, when a third of the race was swept away by that apparently childish complaint.

It is rather pathetic to contrast this golden age with a picture that has been given me from the latter years of Ma'afu's life :—

. . . An old fat man, sitting in the shade of a "nokonoko" tree near the beach, distributing with a drunken smile bottled beer to a few hangers on. . . .

And this is the man who in his prime gave great dinner parties, with a band playing outside beneath a canopy of



palm-leaves, to the officers of the men-of-war that used to come to Lomaloma! He was a man of extraordinary complex character: brave, clever, and unscrupulous, yet held in the greatest affection by all his people, who would willingly have died for him. There was distinctly something Napoleonic about him.

In his younger days he always led the van in his battles on land, and in the sea-fights he would sail across and challenge the biggest canoe on the opposite side to a single combat, a challenge rarely accepted. Even as he grew older and stouter he would still insist on taking a personal part in all the fighting, and Lolohca, one of the captains of his companies, told me how at the Bavatu fight Ma'afu tried to take part in the charge, but had to fall back, puffing and panting, to the rear, whence directly he regained his breath he did havoc with his gun against a section which had come up unexpectedly on one wing.

When he took office under the British Government he still managed to maintain an absolute power over his people, and thought nothing of having a lazy or recalcitrant native triced up to a coconut tree and flogged with the branching spathe of the palm, a natural "cat-o'-nine-tails." Yet his people took it all as a matter of course. He was their overlord. When the Government rent-monies were sent up to him for distribution among the tribes, accompanied by masses of blue official forms for the signatures of the individual recipients, he said, "What nonsense is this? The people cannot sign their names, and even if they could they would not understand this method of division into paltry sums. They know that if I choose I could claim the lot, but the Government have trusted me, so I scorn to take it. Here you,"—taking a double handful of silver coins and throwing them up in the air before the



Received from the COLONIAL GOVERNMENT of FIDJ the sum of  
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 being in full settlement of my claim for Salary for the month of *January*  
 1876

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waiting multitude,—“scramble for this, and may the best man get what he can.” And so amid much laughter and amusement the “rent scramble” took place; and the people in those days were far more satisfied than they would have been by methods they did not understand. It was done “vaka turaga” (in a lordly fashion), and that is what they appreciated and were accustomed to.

Yet, autocratic as he was, he realized the dignity of labour, and like his brother monarch, Thakambau, in Fiji, he would do his turn in the yam gardens with the rest, taking a pride in the work of his hands. His death was caused by his turning to with his men when his boat grounded one day on a reef at Mango, for he jumped out to help push it off and cut his foot on the coral. Blood-poisoning set in, and despite the attention of a Government doctor sent up post haste from the capital, he died shortly afterwards at Lomaloma, at the age of nearly eighty, lamented by all. I have the original draft of a characteristic petition that was sent in by Fijian natives to the Government after his death. It speaks for itself. . . .

. . . We want you to understand the true mind of all the towns. Ma'afu we liked, and he liked us. He was strong. We plotted against him, and failed. And Ma'afu is dead. If another Tongan is now to be made Roko (Governor), we will secede to Bau or Thakaundrove. This is our true mind. . . .

The official obsequies took place at Lakemba, and were attended by representatives from the King of Tonga and from all parts of Fiji, headed by Governor Sir William des Voeux, who came out to Lau in H.M.S. *Miranda* for the purpose.

Great slabs of stone surround the grave, in the Tongan fashion. The accompanying photograph of it shows his son standing in the background to the right. In later



years there was a movement from Tonga to have the body taken back there, but at once there arose a protest from the whole of the Tongan colony in Lau, who threatened to leave Fiji *en masse* and follow Ma'afu if his body were taken. As they were useful and valuable citizens, this could not be thought of, so Ma'afu still remains at rest beneath the palm-trees, in the heart of the kingdom he built up.



## CHAPTER VIII

### STILL MORE KINGS !

I HAVE written in the last chapter of the complex character of Ma'afu, and shown that he did not hesitate to use any means to attain his end. This was never more clearly shown than in the tragedy of Mara, a Fijian Chief who went forth, like a knight errant of old, to seek adventures, but who crossed the path of Ma'afu in so doing, and in consequence met his doom.

Mara was half-brother to King Thakambau, and also "Vasu to Lau," which meant that, through his mother,—who was the "Princess Royal" of Lau,—he could claim by ancient Fijian custom anything he wanted, no matter what the cost, from the people of Lau. Such a man was therefore bound to be a thorn in the side of Ma'afu, who claimed all Lau as his by right of conquest. So that a veiled enmity existed between them from the beginning.

Because Ma'afu, like all the Tongans, was a Christian, Mara decided to remain a heathen; because Ma'afu leaned towards "civilization," cannon, and modern methods of warfare, Mara resolved to adhere to the ways of his forefathers, and followed the old Fijian ways of fighting; and, perhaps, because Ma'afu was a man of stern common sense, Mara preferred to be an incurable romancist, a dreamer of dreams. Was it not Mara who sailed forth towards the horizon to search for Burotu, the ancient



paradise of the gods, only to return after many days discomfited, but with faith still unimpaired? Was it not Mara who at the dread last went out to his execution as a political offender, dressed in all the glories of full naval uniform?

The last act in the drama of Mara unfolded itself over a course of years, but his doom was ever present, and he knew it. It all started through his being upbraided by his half-brother Thakambau for the procrastination with which he, as the representative of Lau, had brought in the tribute from those islands. This was before the great rise to power of Ma'afu, and while the Moala Group was still nominally under Thakambau; but even here we see the hidden hand of Ma'afu, who was no doubt working to his own ends and putting hindrances in the way.

Mara, quick tempered as ever, took umbrage at this, and after a heated argument fled to Tui Dreketi, Thakambau's rival in the neighbouring chiefdom of Rewa. But unfortunately for him, it was not long before King George of Tonga came over to Thakambau's assistance against Rewa, with the resulting fight at Kamba, in which, as already related, Ma'afu took part, and which finally established Thakambau firmly upon his previously precarious throne.

Now Mara had previously made "the grand tour" that all young Fijian nobles made, to Tonga, and had fought gallantly for King George in the local Tongan wars. So that the King was loath to harm him, and gave orders that he should be captured if possible, but without injury. And he was doubly moved to do this since he had with him in the big war-canoes Mara's little daughter, having picked her up to take on to her uncle at Bau when he



called in at Lakemba for Tongan re-inforcements. *And she, now an old lady in Lau, it was who told me these events, of which she was an eye-witness, during that war of nearly seventy years ago.*

Mara escaped, and lived for some time at Levuka ; and Thakambau, who was never really at enmity with him, on several occasions placed a schooner at his niece's disposal so that she might visit her father and reason with him. Thakambau only required him to ask for pardon, to "soro," as the Fijians have it, and all would be forgiven. Then Ma'afu said that he would try what he could do, and meeting Mara he used his gift of persuasion so successfully that Mara decided to come in.

The whale's teeth, the token of the "soro," were duly presented, but there occurred a delay of many days in their acceptance by Thakambau, due, it was said afterwards, to Ma'afu's persuading Thakambau that it would be more "kingly" to keep the delinquent on tenter-hooks for a while. The result was that Mara retired to his fastnesses, mortified, a course of action which greatly incensed Thakambau, who now gave orders that he should be brought in willy-nilly, and Mara was haled before him.

A solemn meeting of the chiefs was then held in the gloom of the great thatched Council Chamber, but it was noticeable that Ma'afu had taken the opportunity to be away at Mathuata, not wishing to appear openly in the matter, but having, no doubt, already sown the seed. Thakambau angrily said, "What shall be done with this man?" Not a word was heard, for none wanted to condemn him. Agam Thakambau asked, and this time the Chief of Lasakau, the immediate retainer and hanger-on of Thakambau, answered "Death." So at the due time Mara was executed, as a chief, and by



the strangling cord, after the ancient Fijian way ; but, as I have said before, dressed in a gold-laced naval uniform.

I never cared to ask Adi Mere (the Lady Mary), his daughter, about this, but she once said to me when I was visiting her, " that big mirror over there was noticed by Ma'afu when he called in to see my husband one day, years after my father's death, and he said to me with a sigh, ' It was Mara who gave me my first big mirror (glass of shadows).' So I answered him, ' Yes, and it was you who caused his shadow to depart.' Whereupon he gave a guilty start and left the house, never to return again."

It was this plucky old lady who told me how, as a young girl, she and some playfellows had discovered certain flat round pieces of metal half buried above high-water mark, and how they had found them far better than the usual smooth stones to send skimming over the surface of the still water inside the lagoons. These turned out afterwards to be Spanish doubloons, part of a buried treasure from one of the many ancient wrecks, chiefly Spanish buccaneers and sandal-wood hunters, that have left their bones on the inhospitable reefs of Fiji. Literally a case of making ducks and drakes with one's money !

Years afterwards I came across on Moala Island an old Spanish silver dollar of the end of the eighteenth century, with, curiously enough, some Chinese marks punched into it. It told its own story, for evidently it had come from Spain in one of the ships on the Pacific sandal-wood trade for China ; while there it must have been in circulation in some coastal port (many Chinese merchants to this day punch their mark on proved silver coins that come to them, in order to show that they are prepared to " honour " them if ever brought back again), and thence



passed back to the Spaniards ; and at last was wrecked with the ship on the reefs of Fiji on its way home.

The Lady Mary had altogether a most romantic career. A certain young trader, William Hennings, fell in love with her in those stormy days of which I have just been writing, when she was living in the guardianship of her uncle, King Thakambau. Thakambau would not hear of the match, so the young man, nothing daunted, eloped with her and fled to a distant little island where he had established a home. He then mounted a brass cannon on a height above his house overlooking the sea, and threatened to blow Thakambau to bits if he ventured to approach. Thakambau, who always admired bravery, forgave him soon after this ; but it was touch and go at one time whether the young couple might not have been killed,—and eaten !

I came to know old Mr. Hennings very well towards the closing years of his life, and shall always remember him as a true and courtly gentleman of the old school, a man of charming personality and a wonderful fund of anecdote. He was born in Western Germany, in the days before Prussianism had enveloped the land ; but he had lived for over fifty years in Fiji and had almost forgotten his mother tongue. I am glad to think that his death came just before the war, for he would have been sorely grieved at it all.

He originally came out with several brothers on behalf of the famous firm of Goddefroy & Co. of Hamburg, which had ramifications all over the Pacific, and which ultimately failed for the huge sum of a million sterling. He then started trading on his own, and, being now connected by marriage with the highest chiefs, as well as being a man of scrupulous honesty in business matters (a somewhat



rare thing among the early traders in the Pacific), he soon acquired large interests in Fiji, especially throughout the Lau Islands. On the top of this came the cotton boom, and then he made a fortune; always, however, re-investing his money in more cotton lands. He started a bank (the notes were known through all the saloons in Fiji as "Hennings' shin-plasters," and are now quite a museum curiosity), and many other business agencies and concerns, among them a line of big ships sailing direct to Europe with cotton cargoes.

Then, when the bottom suddenly fell out of the cotton market, combined with the misfortune of a severe hurricane that destroyed his plantations and wrecked his ships and stores, he failed, and lost everything at a blow. Such was his character, however, that though it caused him to be crippled for the rest of his life, he gradually repaid every penny that he had become responsible for, and eventually cleared off the full twenty shillings in the pound. He lived to be hale and hearty till about the age of eighty, and up till a few months of his death would think nothing of walking at a quick pace through the heat of a tropical day a journey of twelve miles from his place up the coast to visit me at Lomaloma. A truly wonderful old man.

His wife, who I believe still survives him, has told me many a tale about her uncle, the famous King Thakambau. *He was the man about whom more has undoubtedly been written than about anyone else in the Pacific.* Born at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Fiji was still hidden from the outside world and the white man almost unknown, he lived through, and took a leading part in, the worst period of bloodshed, rapine, and cannibalism that has probably ever happened in a concentrated



area in the history of the world ; and ended up as a refined and Christian old gentleman and a trusted friend of the British Government !

He was another instance of a King in the Pacific being invested in his innocence with the tawdry shams of a white pseudo-civilization. When Great Britain declined, in 1862, to undertake the responsibility of adding Fiji to her dominions, the whites resolved to set up Thakambau as a King on European lines, with a Constitution and a Parliament, *but only whites were to have a vote*. This finally came to pass in June 1871, and Thakambau was solemnly crowned with a tinselled, "jewelled" crown,—that cost 18s. in Levuka. The House of Assembly had his war-club, covered with little silver doves and olive-branches, as their Mace ; Rules of Procedure were drawn up, and Ministers of State duly appointed.

The Ministers, however, were not very constitutional, for they soon fell at loggerheads with the Members of Parliament, and, on that body proving obstinate, they at last in a lordly way governed without bothering about any Parliament at all.

Thakambau was given a resplendent coat-of-arms for his royal flag (one of the quarterings contained a white dove of peace, which he took to be a fowl, and thought to represent "good dinners and a land of plenty"—after all, only another way of looking at it). Postage stamps were even printed, with a crown and the royal cypher, C.R. This stood for Thakambau Rex (Fijian spelling).

When the British Government eventually did take over Fiji, in 1875, the funds were so low that fresh stamps could not be printed, so the V.R. of Victoria was simply stamped over the C.R. of Thakambau.

He also had an issue of banknotes to try and supple-

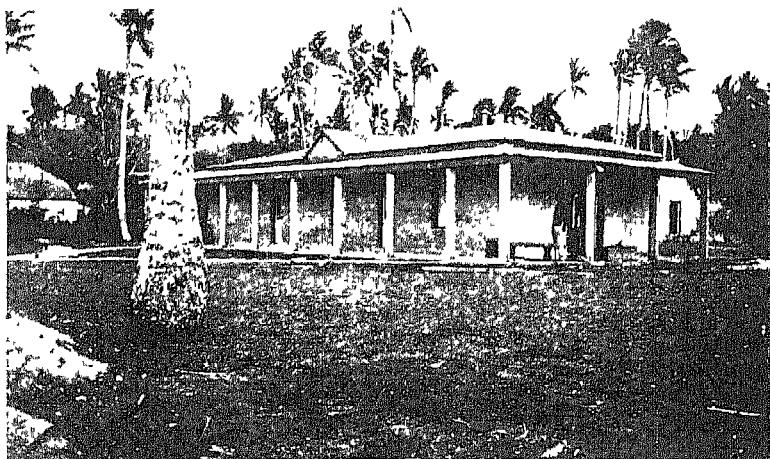


ment those funds, but instead of the usual. . . . "Promise to pay. . . ." they were worded, "Bearer is *entitled* to receive. . . ."—one can almost imagine the rest of the sentence, . . . "—but don't he wish he may get it!" . . .

Despite the low state of the exchequer, champagne flowed like water, and splendid official banquets were organized, a habit that remained for some time even after the British Government was established. Sir Fielding Clarke, who was one of the early Chief Justices there, has told me how Thakambau met his first lump of ice, a rarity that some of the residents had managed to procure from a ship. At a luncheon that day he was given a drink with a piece of ice in it. His eyes started out of his head, and with a cry of "It burns! it burns!" he spat it out, sending it sliding along the table. Covered with confusion, he profusely apologized, for he was always most polite; but it was a long time before he could be persuaded that the numbing sensation was cold, not heat. . . . I was once introduced to a fascinating tame monkey, on the Panama Canal, called Mike; and this monkey delighted, in that torrid region, to lick a lump of ice as long as I held it for him, but nothing would induce him to hold it in his own hand, he would throw it down at once and wring his paw, as if it burnt. . . .

Thakambau had four wives, but the missionaries persuaded him to pension off three of them when he became converted, which I always think was very unjust to the wives, though what Thakambau had to say is not recorded; perhaps his opposition was but lukewarm! The Government was more generous in considering such questions, for by a special law all plural marriages (one speaks of plural voting, so why not plural marriages,





LOMALOMA COURT HOUSE



THE LADY THAKAMBAU.



SETAREKI, THE MAGISTRATE'S CLERK







where bigamy, trigamy, or marriage to the nth, is concerned?) which were made *before* the "hoisting of the flag" were legalized. And only recently a law was passed out there, affecting both whites and natives, by which illegitimate children are made legitimate if the parents at any subsequent time get married. In this I think they are in advance of the antiquated and often harsh laws at home. Of course, it would be necessary to know who the father was:—like the story of the small child who was found weeping in the east end of London. "What's the matter?" said a kind district visitor who was passing. "Boo-hoo! Father and mother's a-fighting!" cried the youngster. "Oh, I'll go and speak to them," replied the other. "Who is your father?" "That's what they're fighting about," was the tearful answer.

Andi Thakambau (the Lady Thakambau), the old King's grand-daughter, is now the leading female representative of the Royal Family in Fiji. This somewhat imperious-looking lady was, as a young girl, very beautiful, and hopes were at one time entertained among Fijians of an alliance with the King of Tonga, but at the last moment it fell through. Her cousin, Ratu Popi, of whom I have written in connection with his cricketing prowess, is the direct representative in the male line, and is doing good work in the Government Service as one of the native Governors of Provinces.

Another cousin of her's is Ratu Joni Mandraiwiwi (which literally means Sir Johnny Sour-bread. But after all, "what's in a name!" We have equally ludicrous names at home. Was there not a famous character at the London police-courts called Jane Cakebread?). Ratu Joni is not only a high chief, but is one of the "wise law-givers" of the colony, inasmuch as he is a Member of the



Legislative Council, and can write M.L.C. after his name. Perhaps this wisdom also accounts for his extremely bald head, an unusual thing for a Fijian. His son, Ratu Sukuna, is, I think, one of the best specimens of a native that the South Seas has ever produced. He was sent as a boy to Wanganui College in New Zealand, an excellent institution run on the lines of our great public schools at home. He then went on to Oxford (the first Fijian ever to do so), where he was when the war broke out.

Anxious to join up at once, he tried everywhere in London to get accepted, but at that time he was told that coloured people were only allowed to serve with "coloured" regiments—which meant negro regiments—despite the fact that he was a light-skinned Pacific Islander, and except for the colour of his skin was to all intents and purposes an ordinary English gentleman. His patriotism unchecked, however, he promptly went over to France (among other accomplishments he could speak French like a Parisian) and joined up with the famous "Foreign Legion." He served two winter campaigns with them in Flanders, was wounded twice, and recommended for the Croix de Guerre. It was then thought advisable that he should return to Fiji for a while, and let the natives know something about the great war. But he was always restless to get back again, and after acting for a time as A.D.C. to the Governor, with the rank of Lieutenant, he volunteered with a contingent of Fijian natives (to which I was attached for part of the time I was in France), and went out again with the rank of sergeant. He came safely through the war, and has lately been called to the Bar at the Middle Temple.



## CHAPTER IX

### HOW THE FIJIANS WENT TO THE WAR

MACAULAY'S Maori gazing on the ruins of London would a few years ago have seemed hardly a wilder flight of imagination than the vision of a Fiji Islander pensively gazing on the ruins of a town in France, which is a sight I have lived to see. One of the most interesting, and—at times—most amusing, experiences of my life was the expedition (in which it was my privilege to have a share) to the war of the contingent of natives from Fiji.

It was at first hoped that these men would be allowed to take an active part in the fighting, as the French coloured troops were about to do, but ultimately it was decided to use their special qualifications in the direction that they were most needed; that is, in the unloading at Calais and transferring to the trains for the front the munitions and war stores that were choking that port by every steamer and which were so urgently wanted up the line. These South Sea natives were all born watermen, and nearly all the men in that picked contingent had also a practical knowledge of stevedores' work, owing to frequent employment in similar positions at the ports in their own country. Added to this, they were all men of magnificent physique and extremely keen on "doing their bit" in the war; so that it was



indeed an eye-opener to some of the professional stevedores, who had come over from London, Cardiff, etc., to see these "ignorant natives" take complete charge of a ship like a company of well-drilled automatons, and smoothly set to work to manipulate the winches and hoists and other machinery that were such things of mystery to the ordinary layman.

Nor were they disappointed as to "active" service, for it was in that year (1917) that the Germans attacked Calais by air and by sea; shelling on one occasion from raiding destroyers, and bombing and machine-gunning from low-flying 'planes for a time almost nightly, as a preparation for the great advance on the channel ports that they were planning to make and which was so narrowly averted.

\* \* \* \* \*

Leaving Fiji on the large oil-burning steamer *Niagara*, we were fated to have an adventure almost at the start, for one day an alarm of fire was given, and news quickly went round that the inflammable cargo of New Zealand flax and kauri gum that we were taking over for war requirements had begun to smoulder. German machinations were at once suspected, but the cause turned out to be the prosaic one of over-heated and fermenting potatoes. Anyhow, the Fiji Contingent were promptly called for, and in an extraordinarily short time they had all the cargo out from that particular hold and repacked, a thing which probably saved the ship, as there were not sufficient hands among the crew to have done it in the time.

At Honolulu they met their native cousins of the eastern Pacific, as I have related in another book, and



were given a royal welcome and a God-speed. The town was *en fête*, and, headed by a local band and with garlands of flowers flung round their necks, they were marched through the streets to the Palace, where at the head of the steps the United States Governor received them and addressed a few words; after which they were taken out to the Waikiki beach and the park, where they beheld their first elephant, a baby one, it is true, but none the less a strange beast for all that. Also they were whirled along in the swift American electric trams, which interested them, but did not surprise them, for it is almost impossible to astonish a South Sea Islander. (On the only other occasion on which a body of Fijians—and that was only a handful—had been taken over to Europe, to the King's Coronation, they were conducted round all the show places of London, the Tower, St. Paul's, Nelson's Monument, etc., and finally, through associations with Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor, and with Mr. (now Sir William) Allardyce, they were taken up to visit Aberdeen. When they returned to Fiji they were of course asked what was the thing that astonished them most, the greatest sight they had seen. To the surprise of everyone, the answer was "the fish market at Aberdeen"! Fish they were used to; and fish in large numbers, fish in quantities that exceeded even the wildest dreams of a Fijian feast, was a thing that really did appeal to them.)

At Waikiki the Hawaiians entertained them to a native feast, including the famous Hawaiian dish of "Poi"; and in a surprisingly short time it was found that the Fijians, especially the more "Polynesian" ones from eastern Fiji, were able to converse with this



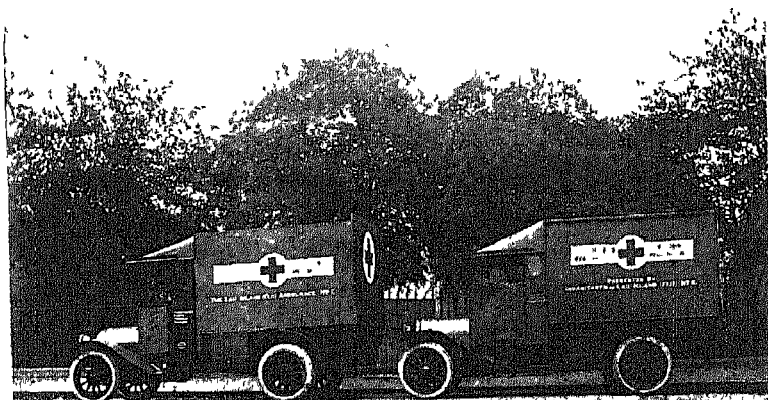
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race of natives, whom they had never seen before, whom, indeed, many of them had never heard of, and who lived in a land 3,000 miles away from them. The reason for this (which I have gone into at some length in another book) is connected with the early wanderings of their common ancestors over the Pacific. All arrangements had been conducted by a local committee of British residents, including Mr. E. L. S. Gordon, the British Consul, whose special knowledge of Japan had caused him to be stationed in this "home from home" of the Japanese (I was told that some 60,000 Japanese live there); but the Americans were also most kind, and very enthusiastic as this small British force marched through the streets, for America had just decided to throw in her lot with the Allies. The German gunboat *Geier* was interned in the harbour, but her captain, through sheer bravado, insisted on rowing right round our big mail-boat,—but not too close, owing to a threatening steward with a bucket of slops,—in his gig, with the German flag flaunting in the stern. I don't think he was able to gather much information, as we were the only "troops" on board, though there were numerous small parties of private individuals, all hurrying from the four corners of the earth to lend a hand in the great struggle. Among these we had two well-known Sydney medical men, Sir Alexander MacCormick and Dr. Fairfax, surgeon and physician respectively to the Prince Alfred Hospital there. I afterwards heard that Sir Alexander, being a surgeon, had been given charge of a fever hospital in France; on the same principle, I suppose, as in the story—no doubt embroidered—of the circular letter that was sent round to nineteen medical officers in a certain war area asking which of them could ride a horse. When





FIJIAN TROOPS EN ROUTE TO THE WAR



AMBULANCES GIVEN BY NATIVES







the replies came in it was found that only two of them could do so, and these two were promptly selected for duty on hospital barges!

We also had as a passenger Sir Henry Greene Kelly, a retired Chief Justice from Nigeria, whose fund of good stories seemed inexhaustible. But I doubt whether any of them will in after years be found so amusing as a tale of how a certain retired Chief Justice, a well-known Sydney surgeon, and a civil servant from Fiji circumvented the "no-treating" law at the Place Viger Hotel at Montreal!

On board the *Niagara* was also the Chairman of the Paramount Film Company, travelling with a staff of operators who had been taking pictures of South Sea life, partly for permanent record with the United States authorities. (Imagine the value to science of such an invention if only the first white men had been in possession of it when they discovered the natives still in their ancient state.) One day he suggested taking, for amusement, a few hundred feet of film of the passengers as they strolled about or sat talking on deck, and afterwards very kindly gave a section of it, that happened to contain ourselves, to my wife . . . "I guess you'll kinder like to see your good man sometimes, even when he's in France," as he said. But a very sad little incident became associated with that same piece of film, for there was on board a recently married young Australian going to the war, and he and his wife also happened to come into that particular section. Some months afterwards, having with difficulty traced our address, he wrote to my wife to say that his wife had died suddenly from appendicitis while they were yet passing across America, and could he have a copy made of the section



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of film, the last photographs of her that were ever taken. I was coming home on a few days' leave about that time, and I managed to arrange for him a private exhibition at the New Gallery Cinema Hall, and he had the strange and rather pathetic experience of seeing his wife recalled to life for a few moments. The film was then given to him.

At Vancouver these "Children of the Sun" came in contact with their first snowstorm, though not enough to initiate them into the delights of snowballing, an attraction which they subsequently never tired of in France. And then started the long train journey across 3,000 miles of the C.P.R. in Canada. As most of them had never seen a train before, and the few that had only knew the pocket engines and trucks of the sugar company's lines in certain parts of Fiji, this was indeed a novel experience for them; and when with a sudden roar the train passed into the inky darkness of a tunnel, some of them were not a little anxious as to whether the sun might not have been "put out" for good.

In one of the big cities in Canada, where we had to stop a few days, a mild sensation was caused at the central police station by one of the Fijians, who could speak a little English, "padding in on his bare feet"—as a reporter subsequently headed the article in big letters—to have a look round. This man was a member of the local police force in Fiji, and a professional instinct took him in to inspect the methods of his fellow guardians of the peace in Canada. He was given a hearty welcome, and appears to have explained to an interested audience how the erring criminal was tracked and arrested in the sunny islands of the Pacific.



(As to the bare feet, it was not until the cold winter of northern France was approaching that the Fijian troops abandoned their picturesque native shirt and "kilt" for khaki jackets and breeches, and also boots and puttees. But caps they never had to descend to, indeed, it would have meant a complete sacrifice of their magnificent heads of hair, which even under war conditions in France they managed to keep wonderfully clean by frequent applications of bricklayers' lime, just as they were accustomed to do at home, but with lime made by burning the beautiful branching coral in their own country.)

This policeman, Saula, was a genial smiling giant, who wore the Royal Humane Society's riband for a singularly brave action, while on duty at the Suva wharf, in jumping into the shark-infested harbour and fetching out a man who had fallen in. He subsequently had a little disturbance with some Chinese at Calais, and came under my care with the lens of his right eye dislocated, a chance hit with half a brick. Four Chinamen, however, were brought into hospital as the immediate result, so Saula's honour was satisfied. Indeed, he afterwards became quite friendly with his attackers, and I am glad to say recovered the use of his eye also; so the little trouble (which started owing to professional rivalry, a gang of Chinese not keeping pace by removing quickly enough a cargo which the Fijians were discharging) ended happily.

The Fijians first met these Chinese,—from Weihaiwei and Tientsin,—who were to be their fellow-workers in France, on board the train going across Canada, and afterwards crossed the Atlantic with them on the troopship *Corsican*. Like everything else, very properly,



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throughout the war, arrangements as to the movements of troops or ships were not disclosed until the last moment, and we were quite surprised to meet our Chinese friends once more on the ship. But the arrangement rather upset my own plans, as my wife had so far travelled with me, intending to stay with relatives in England while I was in France, and I had with some difficulty obtained special authority from the Governor-General of Canada for her to cross the Atlantic. (The submarine campaign had by this time caused the authorities to stop all voyages by women except in very special circumstances.)

But at the very last moment, when all our luggage had been put in the cabin and preparations for slipping the hawsers were being made, the Commodore of the Port came on board and said : "I cannot possibly take the responsibility of allowing your wife to travel on this ship, as she is the only woman, and there are 3,000 Chinese coolies on board. If you get torpedoed she would stand no chance at all. She can, however, sail by the *Megantic*, leaving in two or three days' time." My wife still wanted to proceed with me, but I saw that he was right ; so we had to divide the luggage, the money, and everything, in a matter of a few minutes. Later on I heard,—an item of information which the Commodore did *not* disclose,—that we were also carrying 7,000 tons of high explosives, so that a torpedo would have blown us all sky-high in any case.

We were under orders to wear life-belts day and night (to sleep in a belt is a most uncomfortable proceeding, and I am afraid the order was not always strictly adhered to) for the last few days of our journey ; and we took a fortnight getting across, eventually wandering out of



our track far north into the region of the midnight sun. Never were we more glad to see the white ensign than when we made out in the distance three little British destroyers coming out to escort us home for the last few hundred miles, and whistling at us in sheer *joie-de-vivre* as they came dancing up with a wake of white foam trailing behind them. We afterwards heard that the month in which we crossed was the record month of the whole war for losses by submarines in the Atlantic, so we were on the whole quite lucky to reach our destination safe and sound.

We found that Sir Everard im Thurn, who had retired some years before, but who has always kept the interests of Fiji closely at heart, had been specially appointed to look after the "domestic" concerns of contingents from Fiji and from other Crown Colonies. He made the journey up to Liverpool to meet us, and it was pleasant to see the faces of the Fijians light up when they saw the man who had always been a favourite Governor amongst them. A lightning journey was then made right through England from north to south, and bushy heads sticking out of the windows on each side of the train to see the sights caused great astonishment among the country yokels; but although we passed through London, no stop was made even there, except for a few minutes near Addison Road Station, where I had to scramble out with my luggage in the middle of the track. For I was under orders to report at the War Office, and was thereby detained a few days, while the rest of the contingent crossed right over to France.

But even in that nightmare flight through England, wrapped in as much secrecy and mystery almost as the one of the phantom Russians, the ubiquitous reporter



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had spied us out, for next morning in one of the London dailies appeared the following verselet :—

Brown warriors from the southern seas,  
With scalloped kilts and dusky knees,  
And digits,  
Half round the world, as Britain's sons,  
Fijians haste, to give the Huns  
The Fijits !

This is no chronicle of my own sojourn in France, but rather an attempt to record the experiences of these South Sea Islanders, so I will mention only a few of the more amusing happenings concerning them that I can remember during the period that I remained attached to the contingent.

When I rejoined them I found them encamped in tents on a sandy desert a mile or two to the east of Calais, in the direction of Gravelines. I myself was to be "entented," if one may use the word, in the camp of a hospital next door, where I had certain other duties also assigned to me. What a motley crowd we found all round that district : Egyptians, Fijians, Chinese, Colonial troops, and—a few—Indians, while not many miles away were the "Cape boys," whose special job was wagon-driving. Altogether a most annoying reminder to the Germans (who frequently came over us to spy out the land) of the widespread influence of the British Empire.

The first night we were there we heard the heavy guns thundering away in the direction of Ypres, and occasionally the distant sky would light up with some flare or rocket ; but it was not long before the Hun came a bit nearer still, for a few weeks later a number of bombs were dropped at the edge of our camp, and



some more right into the hospital close by, one of the enemy's earliest attempts at a deliberate smashing up of wounded men.

In this case there could be no excuse that it was an accident, as the German 'planes had been over only the day before by daylight, flying low and taking photographs (our anti-aircraft defence was in its infancy then), and could not mistake the big red-cross flags waving everywhere. I happened to have been called up in the night just a few minutes before the attack started to tie an artery of some operation case that had started bleeding again, and in the midst of the din a fragment of shell cut through the hospital marquee and whizzed down past my head, just as I had found the cut end, while other crashes were exploding on all sides—an uncomfortable sensation, as I could not let go the artery or it would have started bleeding again.

That feeling of having to stop in one position with only a bit of canvas over one's head brought home to me more than anything else the horrors that must have been felt by the unfortunate patients with broken legs who were literally strapped to their beds by patent splints and appliances; in fact, they often said it was far worse than anything they had gone through in the trenches, where they did at least have a sporting chance of having a hit back at the enemy, and could also get some sort of shelter. A few months later a series of big dug-outs were built, where "lying?" cases could be wheeled at the first sound of the warning; but their construction was a difficult and lengthy matter, and many more attacks had to be gone through yet.

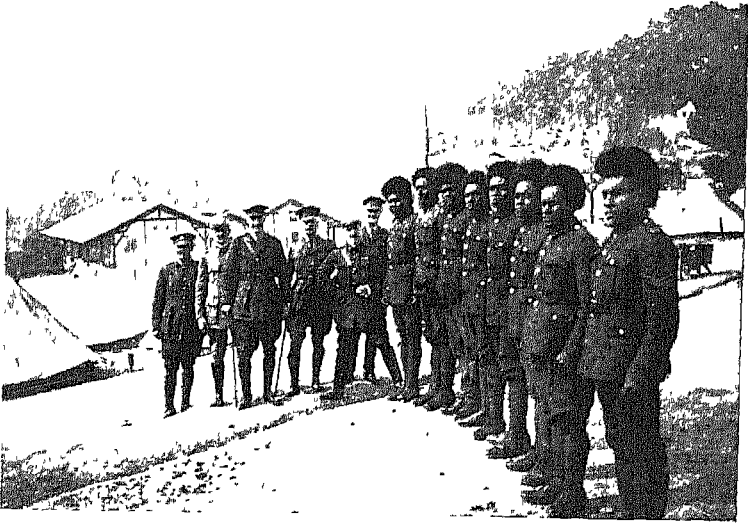
The Fijians had not been in the immediate neighbourhood of this raid, but a week or two later the siren



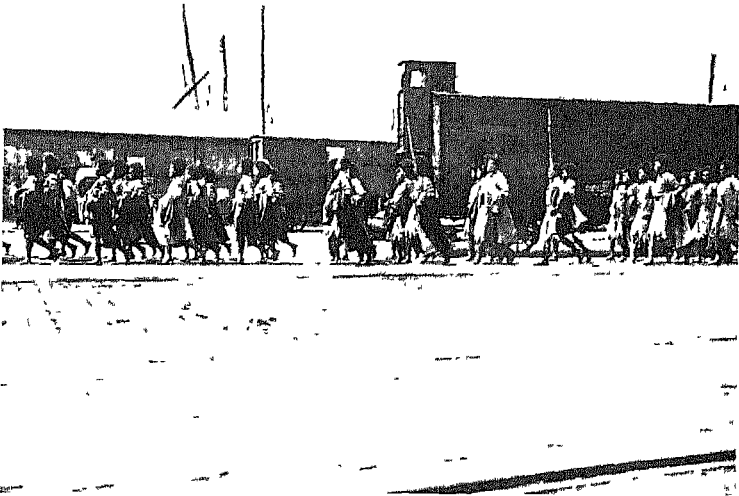
was again heard, and this time the 'planes came over towards the west in the direction of the Isolation Hospital a mile or two away, and next door to the Duchess of Sutherland's Hospital. Here we had three Fijians recovering from chicken-pox, two of them sleeping in one bell-tent and one in another about a hundred yards away. (Two sick beds to a tent was the rule.) The lonely one listened to the bombs bursting nearer and nearer, until at last he could stand it no longer, and with a wild yell he dashed out, and streaking like a hare to the other tent he jumped straight into bed with one of his astonished friends. This was the first time the Fijians had ever heard anything go off louder than an old snider, and the effect on them was therefore not surprising; but I am glad to say that within a week they were as unconcerned at near-dropping bombs as the most hardened Tommy, and, indeed, having bets on "Where did that one go?"

A spirit of friendly optimism pervaded the air, and these simple-natured islanders acquired it as to the manner born, just as they did most of the other habits of the easy-going British soldier. And the dull grey days of that sodden desolate land certainly needed every ounce of optimism that could be brought to bear on them. But luckily Tommy radiated it with spendthrift greatness, and the few pessimists got short shrift from their companions. Which reminds me of the story of the two bricklayers of different temperaments who happened to fall from the top of a high building. As they were nearing the ground the pessimist groaned: "Now for an 'ell of a bump!" to which the optimist hopefully replied: "Well, we've been all right so far!" . . . Another descriptive comparison I have heard of





FIJIAN TROOPS IN WINTER UNIFORM.



FIJIAN TROOPS LANDING







is that an optimist looks at an oyster and expects a pearl, while a pessimist expects ptomaine-poisoning. Being a bit of an optimist myself, these definitions always rather appealed to me, until an unkind friend said that he had heard that a pessimist could be most aptly described as "a person who had been compelled to live with an optimist!"

Another leaf the Fijians took out of Tommy's book was a strange pastime which I feel sure will by this time have been feverishly adopted in all the mountain villages under its correct name of 'OUSE—and not forgetting the proper formula of "Clickety-click, top of the 'ouse, I wins." "Crown and Anchor" card parties, being always promptly smothered by the "red-caps" or military police, never got much hold over them; and, in fact, the Fijians are not real gamblers at heart, as are the Indians, the reason being, I suppose, that the deep-rooted custom of communism has killed any inclination for individual gain.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so these happy-minded islanders were kept busy unloading and repacking the munitions that were so vitally needed in order that "civilized" peoples might blow each other to bits. What a reflection on the twentieth century! . . . The enemy was growing bolder and bolder, and in that September the syren moaned and hooted almost nightly, preceding by a little while the approaching hum of the German air squadrons. The bombs got bigger and bigger, and as the Hun grew more venturesome he also took to swooping down and rattling off his machine-guns. As a rule one had time to get into some sort of shelter, but one night I got



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caught out on an open road, and a bullet smashed against the edge of my steel helmet, a lucky escape for me, though all I felt at the time was as if someone had given me a mighty buffet on the side of the head.

The reason they were able to see so well on that occasion was that an incendiary bomb had fallen into a barge lying in the canal and laden with tins of petrol. The flare lit the sky for miles round, and though our own 'planes were soon up and had driven them off they were able to do a lot of damage in the interval. One of my hospital orderlies was killed and several more injured, and altogether we had a busy time in the operating theatre for a few hours afterwards, ambulances streaming up from all directions. The girl drivers were always wonderfully plucky, and at first wanted to wander about *looking* for casualties during a raid, until this was forbidden, and it was pointed out to them that they could really do more good by standing by and waiting until the telephone messages arrived indicating where casualties were actually waiting.

On three successive nights the Germans managed to bomb fiercely, and from their point of view successfully, a camp of British troops, a camp of Chinese labour corps, and—to our unholy joy—a camp of German prisoners! But when the turn of the operating-room came, all received precisely the same attention, for that is one of the few places that knows no distinction of nationality or colour. I happened at that time to be Anæsthetist to No. 30 General Hospital, where the cases were brought, and at the end of the third night I nearly rolled over, stupefied with the continuous ether fumes. But the case of the surgeons was worse, for they had to concentrate their attention on one spot and keep a steady



hand and wrist, although towards the end absolutely trembling with fatigue, and too tired even to stand up to their work.

Shortly after that I had the luck to be appointed D.A.D.M.S. (Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services) of all that northern area, which ran right up to the Belgian frontier and included Dunkirk, so that I was able to get about a bit and see how things looked at near hand. Dunkirk was then getting badly "strafed" by shells from a Boche 15-inch gun, which, however, very kindly took a good many seconds to reach their destination, so that a whistle was blown, and one had time, usually, to dart into some dug-out or cellar. Not that this would help much in the case of a direct hit on a house, for a 15-inch shell can do a lot of damage; but it saved one from flying fragments. In fact, every householder having such a cellar was obliged to keep the entrance always open, and a red flag to mark it, so that the passer-by could jump in promptly.

There was great activity about this time in establishing aircraft depôts and camps in all directions, and I had to arrange certain preliminaries as to the medical staffing, until these were taken over by the Air Force. For this purpose the use of a car was given me, but *not* one of the Rolls-Royces in which the comic papers were so fond of depicting "the gilded Staff." It was an old rattle-trap, numbered 27; in other words, one of the earliest cars that came over to France with the Expeditionary Force, and it had been all through the retreat from Mons. Yet, despite the effects of the years and of the French pavé, it was certainly a little wonder; and when my A.D.M.S. did not require it I was only too glad to use it. This A.D.M.S. was Colonel P. Gordon,



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C.M.G., whose daughter eventually came over to the same district as an ambulance driver, and recently married Lord Russell of Liverpool. When I first became attached to his staff I used to think that he indulged in too many yards of red tape, but later on, when I myself became "one of the hands in the London tape factory," as I once heard the War Office Staff maliciously described, I realized the vast nature of the whole system, and how really necessary—if utter chaos was to be avoided—most of these "forms and returns" were.

But talking of red tape, there is a delightful little story of how it once came into *practical* use in the operations against the rebel mountaineer tribes of Fiji in 1875. The Governor's bodyguard, though armed with snider rifles, were dressed only in the usual sulu or kilt, and therefore had no pockets or belts in which to carry their cartridges. Mr. A. P. Maudsley, then a young A.D.C. (now well known as an archæologist and ex-President of the Royal Anthropological Institute), had a happy thought, so he persuaded His Excellency to unlock the sacred official dispatch box and draw forth, à la Maskelyne and Cook, yards and yards of red tape. This was then sewn up in loops along strips of canvas and converted into the much-needed cartridge-belts, to the huge delight of the native soldiers, who afterwards retained them as ornaments; and they were no doubt regarded henceforward by their friends at home as we should regard wearers of the noble ribbon of the Garter.

And to the Fijians such "honours" as this were enough, in those days, as similar, if more up-to-date, recognition would be now, to reward them for all the arduous service loyally given in war time. The members of the contingent that went to France were not



attracted by the army pay; that meant nothing to these men, many of whom were well-to-do landowners. One man, whom I saw on one occasion cheerfully carrying sacks of flour from a ship to the Army sheds on the wharf, was a well-known chief who had left a white man behind as manager of his estates while he himself went off to serve the King at a shilling a day. It was sheer loyalty and a spirit of adventure that called them, and I really think that they were the most cheerful soldiers of all those great armies of cheerful men in France. Every difficulty was met with alacrity, every friendly greeting responded to by a flash of white teeth and a twinkling smile, even if the words were but little understood. And the bearing of the men was a model to all, for the white man's drill came to them almost as naturally as swimming; and the reason was that from their earliest years they had been trained to perform the machine-like movements of the war-dances or mekés with a precision and regularity that would have done credit to a company of the Guards. In fact, only the other day Colonel Davidson-Houston, the Administrator of St. Lucia (who was at one time during the war an Assistant Director of Labour in France), told me how well he remembered the particular smartness of these Fijians, and how sorry he had been to lose them from his area. But before they left France for the Italian sphere of operations I myself had to leave them, and, though I did not know it at the time, that was to be the last I ever saw of them; for, when the war was over, fate and the Colonial Office moved me to another part of the world.

But it was certainly a curious coincidence that the very last thing I saw in France, as, just recovering from



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a serious illness I shakily climbed up on to the leave boat at Boulogne, was a motor ambulance marked in big white letters, "Presented by the Inhabitants of the Lau Islands, Fiji." This was one of a pair of ambulances I had succeeded in raising in my group of islands in the early part of the war. The amount, over £1,500, was gathered in, either in coin or in kind, among scenes of the greatest enthusiasm, and the most extraordinary contributions were sometimes brought to me. On one occasion several hundred bottles of coconut oil; on another a live pig, a bundle of mats, and about 150 fly-whisks! But all was grist that came to the mill, and the ambulances were not only purchased but maintained right up to the armistice and possibly longer.

And here I must leave my notes on how the Fijians went to the war, and turn once more to memories of days of peace in those far-off islands beneath the Southern Cross.



## CHAPTER X

### A GLIMPSE OF PRIMITIVE FIJI

I FINISHED the last chapter by referring rather vaguely to the Fiji Islands as being under the Southern Cross, forgetting that probably not one person out of a hundred even to-day could point to them at first glance on a map. To begin with, they lie almost exactly opposite England; in fact, as a friend of mine whose thoughts ran in such directions once said: "If you put a cork-screw in at the Criterion it would come out at Mac's in Fiji." The result is that when it is nine o'clock at night in London it is nine in the morning out there. And, since the 180th meridian runs right through the group, a man I knew on the neighbouring island of Taveuni used to be able to sleep with his head in Monday and his feet in Tuesday,—which must have given him queer dreams. This sort of thing led to all kinds of evasions as to Sunday trading, liquor-selling after hours, etc., so that a special law had to be passed making the date universal for the whole colony.

Fiji is the only British Crown Colony in the Pacific Ocean, though there are several British Protectorates. It is a colony of considerable importance nowadays, due to its large exports of tropical produce, notably sugar, copra (dried coconut), and green fruit. I will not bore the reader with statistics here, and in any case



statistics are so unreliable,—so much can be done with them. As I once heard said, there are only three degrees of lies, and these are: “Lies; damned lies; and STATISTICS.” But the invaluable Whitaker can fill the void for whoever aches for further information. All I will say is that Fiji *is* a big little colony in the empire; but owing to the fact that most of its trade is with Australia, Canada, and New Zealand,—the countries nearest to it,—it is very little known to people at home. The old story that in the early days no less a person than the Secretary of State for the Colonies had to have it pointed out to him on the map, saying, “Demmit, sir, where *is* Fiji?” is not likely to happen nowadays; but since I was in Fiji a much-travelled and re-directed letter arrived there (not for me), bearing, among other inscriptions one from the G.P.O., London, directing their forwarding branch to “try West Africa!”

But it is not only the Post Office that is doubtful about such out-of-the-way places. Apparently even the Highest Authority may at times need a gentle reminder. When I was in the Falkland Islands I heard a story, said to be absolutely true, about some missionaries who were once wrecked there while going round the Horn. They got safely ashore, and the news was sent home, reaching in due time Exeter Hall, where there happened to be a meeting. A fervent preacher thereupon flopped on his knees and poured forth his soul in a long prayer for missions all over the world, ending up, “And also, O Lord, we pray Thee to be with our brethren stranded in the Falkland Islands, which, *as Thou knowest*, are situated in the South Atlantic Ocean!”

Yes, Fiji has for long been just “a spot somewhere in the Pacific” to most people, from the days when “The



"King of the Cannibal Islands" was a popular song on the music halls down to modern times, when one occasionally reads in the newspaper of some enlightened magistrate,—a Glasgow one was the last I noticed,—vaguely wishing that he could export all drunks to "the Fiji Islands," a semi-mythical place like Timbucloo, a sort of comic opera spot among the unknown corners of the earth. This reputation is really not deserved for a modern colony whose capital boasts of wide streets, of large stone buildings, banks, cinemas, taxis, and all the other "joys" of civilization, including daily newspapers, which could, if it were not for delays at transmitting stations, publish news of the Derby by cable or wireless several hours before—according to the clock—it had actually happened, because the sun in its daily round is beaten by the speed of man's invention.

It was thus somewhat of a blow to our vanity when Stephen Haweis, the artist, came out just before the war armed—in addition to his palette—with many strange weapons, strings of beads, and several bales of red flannel "to barter with the savages!" Haweis is the son of the well-known preacher and writer, the Rev. R. B. Haweis, of *Music and Morals* fame, and he has without doubt inherited the genius of his father, though in a different medium. He visited us in Lomaloma and stayed some weeks, bringing into our exiled lives with his brilliant conversation a glimpse of the world of men and things that was like a tonic. He was a little man with a big nose and the traditional locks of the artist, and when I first met him was dressed in a mustard-yellow suit, a red tie, and a huge round topee; but one of the kindest of men, and one possessing the wide vision of a great mind. His paintings were gems



of pure delight, and he caught the sunlit atmosphere of the South Seas in a way no one, save perhaps the great French master, Gauguin, had ever done before.

Gauguin, though no longer of this world, was yet able to link up for me two men of genius whom I have been privileged to call my friends. Admirers of the Gauguin school well know how this wonderful Frenchman, in whose blood ran the poetry of a strain of Polynesian ancestry, was born in perhaps the most beautiful spot in the world, the far-off island of Tahiti, in the wide waters of the eastern Pacific. As a youngster he went to France, and, studying in Paris, developed that magic touch which, as is so often the way, was only to be recognized after his death. But the call of the reefs and palms was irresistibly singing in his ears, and he threw up his prospects, his career, everything, and fled back to his own enchanted isle, living among his native friends almost in a state of poverty until his too early death. Then, in a spirit of irony, the world seemed to wake up, and his paintings in Paris were eagerly collected, and brought enormous sums at all the art sales, very often from wealthy buyers, who now learnt for the first time that it was the correct thing to possess a "Gauguin."

Haweis, however, had a genuine appreciation of the divine touch that had descended upon this "child of the sun," and was most anxious to possess, for the picture's sake, a specimen of the dead artist's work. And a rumour having reached him from half across the world that there were still some unfinished paintings on glass (said to be part of a broken window, possibly for lack of a canvas) in the little house at Tahiti, he was all on fire to press on to that place. And so he left us, to my great regret, and I have never seen him since.



But the next stage of the story is that shortly afterwards I myself called at Tahiti, on a voyage across the Pacific, and there met a most delightful young Englishman, who eventually came on with us by our steamer and journeyed with us for sixteen days to San Francisco. Sixteen days at sea, passed by a handful of Englishmen among a crowd of foreigners, means an intimacy that years of acquaintance on land would never bring, and almost the first day our new friend told us how he had heard of some paintings on glass by Gauguin, an artist whose work he much admired, and had called at Tahiti specially to try and get hold of them. "But," he said, throwing back the waving curls from his forehead with a laugh, "some other Englishman had got there first and walked off with them, though, good luck to him, I believe they were rather scrappy unfinished things, after all." And the speaker was Rupert Brooke, whose name was within the year to encircle the civilized world as that of a great English poet, cut off in the flower of his youth, one more victim of the war, at the distant island of Lemnos.

Many were the long talks we had together on the deck in the tropic nights beneath the splendour of the stars, as I learnt how he had gone out there to see the world and gather "local colour" for his writings. For in his own mind he had a vision of a future of prose-writing rather than of poetry, and his prose already showed signs of that beauty of form that is a true poem in itself. Poor lad, he did not see much of the world after all, yet a greater vision was vouchsafed to him in that short life than will be given to most of us who may yet count the years by scores . . . *Requiescat in pace.* . . .

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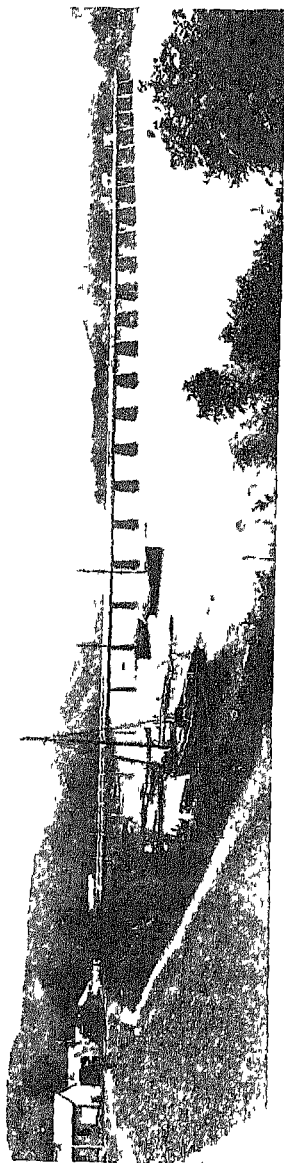


I have shown in another book how the native, with his often inspired thought, has poetically called the white strangers "Vavalangi," or they who have "burst through the horizon of the heavens" (the treaders of the sky) and mysteriously reached their shores. So must it have seemed to them when they woke up one morning to see a monster canoe, a veritable floating island, the ship of Captain Cook, or some other early explorer, at anchor in the lagoon. The first white men were gods indeed, strange beings who wore three-cornered hats and "clothes" (whatever these might be), and ate fire and exhaled smoke as they walked about.

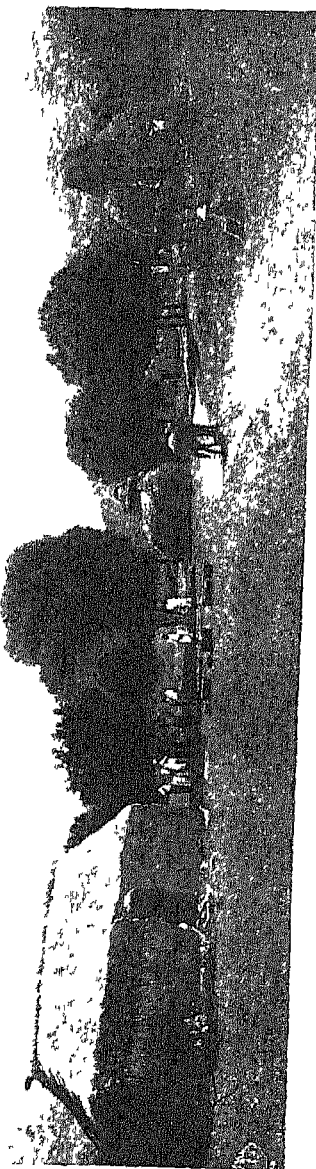
Then came spasmodic visits from sandal-wood traders, escaping convicts, and early whalers, until in the latter half of the nineteenth century a handful of whites gathered together in Levuka and became genuine "settlers." Among the first of these there happened to be a coal-black negro, a cook off some ship, who lived on to a goodly age and whose proud boast used to be: "Yes, Sah, I am one ob de bery first *white* men dat eber settled in dis country."

By the time I went out there Fiji had been well settled for fifty years, and even in the remotest villages in the mountains a white face was no novelty, though often a matter of interesting curiosity. Fifteen years ago I was detailed for duty in the Singatoka and Tholo districts, and in some of the mountain villages of the latter province I doubt whether a white man was seen more than about once a year. At least I hope I am not wrong in attributing to the colour, and not to the features, of my face the fact that small native children would sometimes run crying to their mothers when they saw me, just as white children at home will do if they chance





BRIDGE ACROSS THE SINGATOKA RIVER



A MOUNTAIN TOWN, FUI







on a negro. But I *do* know that in those days, not so long ago, the highland natives were not yet quite used to horses, and I have seen a wild scramble up coconut-trees when mounted travellers appeared. It was in a mountain village, too, that to my great delight I once saw a stone axe actually in use. A vision of the Stone Age still existing in the twentieth century! The usual thing, however, was for the native to obtain the blade of a cheap Birmingham plane and lash it on with coconut fibre to the short arm of the same L-shaped wooden haft that once held his stone axe, or rather adze; for the edge was used along the grain of the fallen log, which the man patiently hollowed,—after charring the part to be excavated, in order to facilitate his work. Great wooden drums, food-mixing troughs, and other articles were, and still are, hollowed out in this way in the mountains, as are dug-out canoes in the coastal towns.

I shall never forget our arrival at the mouth of the Singatoka River, my first country station in Fiji, and where we lived for nearly two years. The little Government steamer *Ranandi*, which has been said to have seventeen different kinds of movement, and has made even the captain sick, could not enter the river owing to a sand bar, and we were summarily decanted, feeling very sorry for ourselves, into a small launch with all our luggage and the faithful Henry and Louisa, while our few tables and chairs were towed in a whale-boat astern. After chugging along an absolutely deserted waterway for some two or three miles, there came into view a hill, on which was perched a lonely little house; and at the foot of the hill, but a little higher up the river, a couple of small sheds facing, across the stream, a native village of thatched huts. The little house was



our home to be, and the two sheds the local "William Whiteley's."

Still no sign of life, until at last the launch's whistle brought to the river bank a few straggling natives, the most extraordinary assembly I had ever seen. There were half a dozen magnificently built men, with immense bushes of stiff outstanding red-gold hair, and carrying in their hands the inevitable long, broad-bladed knife or cutlass. (One had also a three-pronged fishing spear.) But as for clothing, a shell-ring on the arm and a piece of Manchester print round the waist was all they possessed. The only exception was a stout and beaming old gentleman, who turned out to be the Government native doctor, and he, by virtue of his office, I suppose, wore also a pair of spectacles and an ancient cricket shirt, from the pocket of which peeped a stethoscope! The ladies of the party were apparently fully dressed in a hanging fringe of woven grass, known as a "liku," and this, with some tattooing round the corners of the mouth, *was all they wore*. But they were not the beautiful damsels of the South Seas that one reads about in novels, for they were all distinctly *passé*, and, moreover, their features showed that they had a considerable strain of the debased Melanesian blood of the more negroid people of Tholo and the West. A true Polynesian girl really *is* beautiful, but a Melanesian is a very different article.

Then there were one or two children among the crowd, and these were completely clad in a smile, while any shyness they may have had was due not so much to lack of wardrobe, but rather to seeing white strangers suddenly appearing from the river. These little toddlers, with fat protruding stomachs, were clinging to their



mothers' hands and gazing with open eyes at us, looking very comical, some with half the head carefully shaved, some with a solitary tuft left in the centre like a clown's toupee, and some with a veritable priestly tonsure. After a time we got used to seeing the general lack of clothing, and a waistcloth or a liku seemed to make a native fully dressed. After all, it is only a matter of what the eye is accustomed to. Just as one's dog looks strangely unclothed if he happens to lose his collar, yet fully dressed with it on.

After a time the Magistrate, Mr. Wright, came down to greet us, and then the storekeeper, John Robertson, a kind-hearted little Scotsman, who for all his many years in Fiji had never lost the burr of his native land. And so we moved up in procession to our new home, having met *the whole of the white population* in the eleven hundred square miles of territory that comprised my district, an area about seven times the size of the Isle of Wight.

It was a desolate outlook from the top of our hill, for a vast expanse of country could be seen stretching for miles in all directions, green and fertile-looking, it was true, but bare of any sign of human habitation (even the native village of grass huts was hidden), and we knew that there was not a soul to meet or talk to in all that great area of silence. Man is a gregarious animal after all, and woman more so, and I turned to sympathize with my wife about it, but she was already far too busy with the domestic concerns of the house, which perhaps after all was a good thing. We had only been out from home a few weeks, and although I had been wrestling very hard with vocabularies and grammar it was not an easy thing suddenly to take up



one's work among a large native population—who spoke a dialect much altered from the printed dictionary—without any interpreter. But the enforced conversations resulted in my picking up the language far sooner than I should otherwise have done, and I was thus able to talk fairly fluently in this new tongue in a very short time; much to my own surprise, for it is a very real language, with plenty of grammar (twenty-seven personal pronouns, among other things!)

The district became rapidly developed after we left, due to the invasion of the wealthy and go-ahead Colonial Sugar Refining Company, or C.S.R., as it is known throughout Australia and Fiji; white people appeared from all directions, and one of the first things done was to start a light railway and throw a good bridge across the river.

But I am glad to have known it in its primitive state, as it was actually a picture of Fiji in the ancient times, with the one exception—and how great a one!—that the British rule had made life safe and brought justice to all men.

Away up the river, in the heart of the Tholo mountains, whose scattered villages I had periodically to inspect, things were even more primitive than on the coast. This mountain district had been the last home of the cannibals and heathen (the name was synonymous), and though now “converted,” and eaters of short pig rather than long pig, they were still a wild-looking people and distinctly “nervy” when white people were about; while on my part, though I really knew that they would be all right, I felt a bit jumpy myself the first time I had to go, and alone, through their district some fifteen years ago. But a railway has a wonder-



fully civilizing influence, and no doubt things are very different now.

They had had relapses before,—one was a very serious one,—and being a people easily swayed by native fanatics, and being still in their hearts firm believers in witchcraft and devils, there was never any positive certainty that they might not break out again at any time. Their greatest “falling from grace,” as the missionaries would put it, occurred in 1875, and was brought about in rather a curious way. The whole country had just been ceded to Great Britain, and King Thakambau had been given a yacht, a pension, and—to him the most wonderful thing of all—a trip to Sydney, as part of his recompense. On the voyage home he must have, unknown to the white officials travelling with him, been sickening for measles, which was then a novel disease to the Fijians. When he landed, thousands of the natives flocked to greet him as one returned from another world, and long processions of the chiefs came up to kiss his hands or garments. Now, a Fijian does not kiss in the occidental manner, but sniffs with his nose,—this is the universal practice through the South Seas, and the “rub noses” of the Maori is only a variety of this. The result was that many of the chiefs caught the new complaint, and on returning to their villages their own followers “sniffed” them in turn, and measles spread like wildfire throughout the land. Although to us, partially immunized through many generations, it is but a trivial and childish complaint, it hit upon a virgin soil among these South Sea islanders and assumed an extraordinary virulence. In a few months it actually *killed* no less than one-third of the whole Fijian race, and in proportion to the size of the nation it thus became one of the worst epidemics known to history.



Here was a grand opportunity for a few discontented spirits among the least civilized mountain tribes. They seized upon the white man and his new religion as a text, and pointed out how this disease had been brought upon them as a scourge for forsaking the old gods. Within a month or two all the mountaineers were up in arms *and had thrown off their clothes and had grown their hair*, so that some of their heads were now a yard in diameter instead of the normal half-yard! This signified that they had become heathen again, and as a corollary cannibalism became rife once more, some of the mission followers being the first victims.

An armed expedition was sent against the rebels, but proved insufficient. Reinforcements were hurried up, and soon the campaign began to assume the features of a little war. And this little war was the starting-point of the careers of several very eminent men. Lieutenant L. F. Knollys (afterwards Inspector-General in Jamaica and in Ceylon) was in command, and a youthful cadet named Le Hunte was given the somewhat extraordinary rank of sub-General. He it was who afterwards became Sir George Le Hunte, G.C.M.G., Governor of South Australia. Arthur Havelock was another young man connected with the operations. He afterwards became President of Nevis, and then successively Governor of Trinidad, Natal, Ceylon, Madras, and Tasmania—a truly wonderful career.

There was also a young doctor to the forces, named MacGregor, who had a curious experience with one of the troops. This man had his leg shattered by a slug from one of the "heathens'" rusty guns, and an amputation had to be performed. After it was over the grateful patient turned round to the doctor and said,



politely but firmly, "Since you have removed my leg, sir, it is obvious that you must now keep me for the rest of my life, as how otherwise shall I get a living?" It seemed logical, but the doctor felt there was a flaw in it somewhere. He told me this story many years afterwards with great gusto, and he had not forgotten a single detail of it, for he had a wonderfully retentive memory and a clear picture of events in his mind, as became a methodical Scotsman and one who by his own efforts rose to be "The Right Honourable Sir William MacGregor, G.C.M.G., Governor of Queensland."

When a medical student it was doubtful whether he could continue his career owing to his poverty, and a good tale is told of how he had to inform his landlady that he would have to give it all up. She replied, "How much can you manage?" to which came the doleful answer, "I have only half a crown a week!" She considered for a moment and said, "I might do it"; and she did,—on oatmeal! But he survived it, to the lasting benefit of the Empire. The often quoted repartee to Dr. Johnson's somewhat boorish remark is apropos here. He had rumbled forth, it will be remembered, "Do you feed men in Scotland on oats? Why, that is what we give to horses in England." And the quick rejoinder came back, with a courtly bow, "And where will one find such men,—and such horses?"

He was a man of stirring character, as rugged and honest in disposition as he was in appearance, a sturdy, grey-bearded and upright veteran with a broad Scottish accent. He always had a great love of Fiji and things Fijian in his heart, and he even adopted the native "sulu" when walking about up-country in Lagos where he was once Governor. He also called his elder



daughter (who afterwards married Admiral Sir Alfred Paget) "Viti," which is the correct native rendering of Fiji.

Another Fiji official (now Sir William Allardyce, Governor of Tasmania) also followed suit and gave his elder daughter the same poetical name. The natives sometimes retaliated, and one of my clerks once came and asked my permission to have his infant daughter christened "Alice-from-London," after my wife, whose Christian name he had heard me use, and who, he knew, came from London!

Writing of this christening reminds me that, by a curious coincidence, it took place in the same week in which I had the melancholy satisfaction of giving an English burial to Sir William MacGregor's aged father-in-law, Captain Cocks, late Government Harbourmaster of Fiji. The old gentleman had retired to spend the last years of his life at Lomaloma, where my station then was, and in the absence of the resident missionary, who was cruising round some of the islands of his district, it fell to my lot as District Commissioner to read the burial service and place a Union Jack on his coffin, which had been made at an hour's notice by a local boat-builder. It was a terribly hot day, and the few white men in the district acting as bearers,—a last token of respect to one of their own race,—had to struggle up the hillside in the glare of the sun, but they felt rewarded to think that he was laid to rest beneath the palms, and overlooking the seas that he loved and knew so well.

He had often told me the story of how fate brought him to Fiji more than fifty years before, when he was a boy on the barque *Emma Sharrett*. She was sailing



from California to Australia with a general cargo and also some of the unsuccessful "forty-niners," for luck did not come to everybody in that wild scramble for gold. Approaching the neighbourhood of the practically uncharted "Feejee Islands," as they were then known, she struck one night on a reef off the outlying islet of Vatoa or Turtle Island (the only part of Fiji that Captain Cook is said to have seen). As I myself once grounded on the very same reef, I have always had a fellow feeling for this part of Captain Cocks' story. But the next thing to happen was that two great war-canoes put out from the main island, filled with savage-looking warriors. To the immense relief, however, of the shipwrecked men, one of the natives indicated that they were Christians. And so it was, for they happened to be some of the first natives in Fiji to come under missionary influence.

The master of the barque had a rough sketch map of the Fiji group, made by a brother captain the year before, and one of the only two places mentioned by name was Moala Island. So they inquired by signs how they were to get to Moala, whereupon the natives all violently shook their heads as a warning, and pretended to gnaw at their own arms, a vivid but horrible suggestion of the practices of the still unconverted Moala men! Ultimately the men in the canoes agreed to take them to Lakemba, and thence to Levuka, where one or two white men had then settled; and it was at Lakemba that Andi Mary, of whom I have written in Chapter VIII, was picked up with her father and accompanied them to the white settlement. So that it was interesting to me in after years to hear the story from both the native and the white point of view.



But I have been digressing again, via the Tholo war and Sir William MacGregor, from my original intention of describing my first acquaintance with some of the villages of the Tholo mountaineers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Starting at daybreak one morning on the huge, though old, hospital horse, Rai Maté, or "Visit the Sick" (for this was in the early days when I was a Government doctor in the district), I cantered along the river bank through the thin mist wreaths that were slowly disappearing beneath the rays of the ascending sun. The turf road was good, though merely a bridle track, and at times it narrowed into a three-foot path cut into the side of the steep cliff that lined the river's edge,—not too pleasant when the red clay grew slippery from the frequent showers. On the saddle bow (I had an Australian saddle with projecting thigh-pads and a fairly high peak) was fastened a small case of tabloid drugs and a wallet of instruments, all rolled up in my macintosh, while to the rings behind me was attached a tight bundle containing a few articles of clothing. On one side was another small hanging bag containing some provisions, but I knew I should have to rely chiefly on the native villages for such supplies, and moreover I had been warned that I should have to swim the rivers.

So off I went, feeling loaded up rather like the White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland*. The simile was more natural, too, in that I had only been on a horse twice before in my life, and Rai Maté, old as he was, was a lusty warrior who liked to take the bit between his teeth when he felt fresh. (To my intense surprise I managed to survive his antics, and when I was thrown, for the



first time, a few weeks later, it was over the head of a diminutive little wretch of a native-bred stallion, on whom my feet nearly touched the ground as he bolted along !)

About eight miles up (there was no question of missing the path, as there was only one, and it followed the river all the way) I came to a so-called ford, but although I crossed the stirrups and gingerly drew up my legs till they were right on top of the saddle, and although Rai Maté's great height enabled him to keep on his feet the whole way, I yet got fairly wet, and my poor little bag of provisions was soaked. (I was nearly drowned at this same "ford" on the return journey, as the river was then in flood, and both horse and self had to swim for it.)

And later came a welcome midday rest at a native village, with the horse tethered among the lush green grass by the river bank ; but I was still among people that I knew, and had not yet reached the boundaries of the true Tholo district. However, just as dusk was falling, and at the end of a fatiguing ride of over forty miles, during which I had crossed and recrossed the winding river no less than three times, I arrived at the place where I had arranged to stop the first night.

Half a mile this side of it I came on a little brown boy gathering fruits from some tree by the wayside. He gave a jump and darted off in the direction of the village, evidently to warn the people, his legs flashing in the setting sun as he ran. Presently a deep booming noise came rolling forth. It was the beating of the great wooden drum to announce the arrival of a stranger, quite probably the same drum that had rolled forth a very different message in the years, not so very long



age, when a cannibal feast was being held. Then out of the semi-darkness came a little procession of shadowy figures, one man, evidently the chief of the town, at their head holding up a flickering "hurricane" lantern as he looked to see who the strange white man might be.

Explaining who I was, in my rather halting Fijian, for I was then new to the country, I dismounted, and was conducted to the largest house in the town, a big black shadow of a building looming high above me. My guide took me by the hand and led me to a sort of primitive drawbridge on a steep incline. It was made of the trunk of a tree, flattened on the upper surface and with notches cut in it to dig one's toes in—easy enough for a native, but extremely difficult to English boots, especially as it was still glistening from a recent shower of rain. This sort of ladder was very necessary, as the house was built on a high artificial mound or "yavu," faced with big pebbles, and towering in the darkness some fourteen feet above the ground. This was unusually high, and I afterwards learnt that the biggest chief has the biggest yavu, but even the humblest men had six-foot mounds.

Scrambling up the log as best I could, I then had to stoop to enter the low doorway (still another protection against invaders in former days), and found myself in what appeared to be a huge square barn, with—high overhead—blackened bamboo rafters just dimly visible in the fitful gleams of the lantern. The soft floor of mats was springy as I walked across it, giving one almost the sensation of walking over a mattress on a spring bed, and this I found was due to the fact that the mats were spread, sewn together to make one huge covering, over a deep layer of springy dried ferns.



There were of course no tables or chairs, but in the centre of this wobbly floor stood a cheap glass lamp (the only European article I saw) flaring and smoking away, having long ago lost its chimney and globe. As I walked along I expected every moment to see it topple over and set fire to this reed-walled, thatched, tinder-box of a house, but there is a providence that looks after drunken men and children, and assuredly these simple natives can be classed with the latter. As a matter of fact, I seldom heard of a native house catching fire, although the people are carelessness itself, and a little later in the evening I actually saw them throwing lighted fire-brands from one to the other that they might get a light for their native "sulukas" or leaf-wrapped cheroots.

At one end of the house was a huge raised platform, about two feet above the ground, and covered with mats of a much finer quality. On this was a wooden head-rest, and here was evidently my bed and pillow. I knew as a matter of course that this, the best house in the town, would be placed at my disposal, as is ever the way with these hospitable people.

When my eyes had grown more used to the light, I noticed a number of men sitting cross-legged round the remaining three walls of the house, still as graven images, and whose only sign of life was a sibilant whispering and an occasional movement as one took a draw at his suluka. It was rather an eerie feeling to be so regarded in silence by these sombre figures half hidden in the shadows, but summoning up my best Fijian I made some foolish and jesting statement as to how both my horse and myself could do with a cup of tea, and that seemed to break the ice, faces lit up with amusement



(luckily they are a people easily amused), and conversation now became general.

As I entered the house I had heard a wild squawking outside, and caught a glimpse of an old rooster with neck outstretched fleeing for dear life, pursued by three or four boys with sticks, and the explanation of this soon became apparent; for within, it seemed, less than thirty minutes of the tragedy a procession of women came in at the other door of the house bearing trays and baskets of yams, plantains, etc., and, as a *pièce de résistance*, my aged friend, boiled, on a dish, staring at me sideways with a glassy eye, and his legs sticking straight up into the air! My host, for so I had now to regard him, explained that the evening meal had been just about to commence, but as the town had now been honoured with my presence they had killed a "toa" (fowl) in addition.

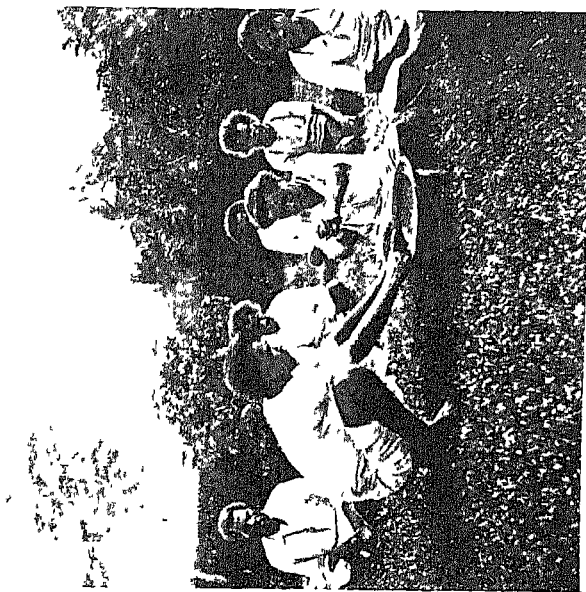
I had hitherto been sitting at the end of the house with my back supported by the bed-platform, as it takes years to get really accustomed to a backless "tailor's" position, but I now began to move towards the others. The chief man, however, brought up to where I was the dish of fowl, some of the best pieces of yam and plantain, and a few breadfruit leaves for plates, so I proceeded to hack off a wing and some breast with my pocket-knife, and started; nor would any of them touch a bit until I had finished eating and made a motion to push the plates away.

I should have mentioned that they first of all brought me a coconut-shell full of a steaming hot liquid, which in the bad light I took to be tea, but to my surprise it was the water in which the fowl had been boiled, a very thin sort of soup, strongly flavoured with some extremely





NATIVE "ADZING" A DUG-OUT CANOE.



CLIP-BEARER RECEIVING KAVA.







biting chillies. (When I asked next morning if it were possible to procure some tea, which I badly wanted, and which I found I had mislaid from among my own provisions, they brought me a quite good substitute made by infusing lemon-grass in hot water, which they frequently use themselves, and which, with a little sugar added, was quite palatable.)

After the meal a woman brought round a wooden bowl of water in which to rinse our hands, a very necessary thing after dining,—as our own Elizabethan ancestors often did,—without the luxury of knives and forks ; and then, after some desultory conversation, my host asked if I would like to have a bowl of yangona. Having tasted it before, I was not very keen on it myself, but I knew that they were always ready for any excuse for a yangona-drinking, so I said yes.

This yangona-making (called kava or ava in other parts of the Pacific), has been so frequently described in other books that I will say no more now than that it is the root of a species of pepper, which is macerated in water, strained, and the resulting liquor partaken of. But there are one or two peculiar things about it that might be worth mentioning.

Firstly, although it is the ancient national drink of South Sea Islanders (in another book I have described the romantic origin of the custom), and is taken with avidity on all festal and ceremonial occasions, yet it is non-fermented and non-intoxicating. Yet this statement should in a way be qualified, as, although the brain remains quite clear, an undue indulgence in it *does* “intoxicate” the legs, and a circle of kava-drinkers may remain more or less rooted to the ground. This, however, would be a very extreme case, the most I per-



sonally have seen being the case of a man finding difficulty in rising, and finally deciding to go to sleep where he was.

Then, again, the old method of preparing it was by *chewing* it, in Samoa by girls, in Fiji by young men. After an hour or so the contributions were then placed in the bowl, and water added to give the required dilution!

(As young people with beautifully polished "ivories," which always underwent a thorough rinsing first, were invariably selected, this is not quite so revolting as at first sight it would seem; but I am glad to say that only on one very ceremonial occasion did I have to taste a brew made in the old national way, and since then the practice has been stopped by law, owing to the possible risk of passing on tuberculosis, a comparatively new disease to these people.)

But on the evening of which I am writing the root was pounded on a great smooth stone, and while this rhythmical pounding was going on some old men in the house took up, in a quavering falsetto, one of the ancient yangona mekés, most of the words of which they themselves do not now understand. It was a very fascinating sight to watch the brown shoulders of the pounder lifting and falling in the uncertain gleams of light, with the circle of half-hidden waiting figures around him, and all the time to listen to the strains, as in a dream, of this weird chant.

There was quite a little ceremony in filling and presenting the cup, with all due recognition of the order of precedence, but this was nothing compared to the vast ceremonial functions I afterwards witnessed in Eastern Fiji, where the correct observances in the passing



of the kava cup almost amounted to a religion. The big bowl and some of the cups (made of course from polished half coconut-shells) were evidently of considerable age, as they had acquired that lovely purple patina, not unlike the bloom of a purple-black grape, that kava in some mysterious way gives to its utensils.

With a doctor's inquisitive eye I noticed that the kava had also given to some of the older men another sort of "patina," though this time it was in the nature of a certain scaliness of the skin, that I had heard of before as a symptom of excessive kava-drinking. But this, and a somewhat lethargic manner, are really the only ill-effects of the drink, so for a national beverage it should receive the hearty support of Mr. "Pussyfoot" Johnson.

Kava-drinking is distinctly an acquired taste among Europeans, but once acquired it grows on one, and there are many whites in Fiji who have become confirmed in the habit. And it is said that indulgence in it lessens any tendency to over-excess in alcohol. One used to see many of the old-stagers in Suva dropping in as a regular thing for their "morning kava" at the store of old Viereck, a German trader of long standing in Fiji, who always had it on tap at so much a bowl. (Viereck's was a regular gossip-shop, and it is not surprising that he was interned during the war, although he protested vigorously.)

The fact that the natives held this national drink in such high appreciation made it all the more easy for the Government to forbid them the white man's drink, and there were very stringent—and to the natives very beneficial—laws as to supplying a native with liquor, or even drinking in company with a native. Though I



am one of those who consider that "temperance" is properly translatable as "moderation," yet in the case of native races, who have not the same self-control as the more lethargic dwellers in cold climates, I certainly think that absolute prohibition is the best thing. And the contrast between a native race who had been allowed alcohol and one that had not was never so clearly shown to me as on one occasion when I travelled from Fiji to Tahiti, and was able to compare these two peoples who were, in the not so very remote ages, sprung from the same ancestry.

Not that there were never any breaches of the law, and occasionally a Fijian would acquire a distinct proficiency in surrounding the white man's "yangona." There was also a system of Government permits, and some of the more responsible chiefs were given these; and as a rule they kept within limits of discretion, fearing as much as anything the disgrace of having the permit taken away, for a native is highly sensitive to any loss of esteem or dignity. Permits were also occasionally issued as "medical comforts," but it was seldom that a genuine claim was put in. Among the whole 7,000 people in the Lau Islands I only issued one of these, and that, curiously enough, was to an old native mission teacher.

On the other hand, I had an amusing experience with reference to temperance drinks. To my surprise one morning when I was paying an early visit to the prison compound (this was in later years in Lau when I was District Commissioner), my sergeant reported that he had had to lock up a native about midnight for being drunk and disorderly. I had a look at the man, and even then, some hours afterwards, he distinctly showed



signs of being "under the influence," and had evidently been very much elevated at the height of his adventures. All he could say was that he had purchased one or two jugs of temperance hop-beer from a native trader, and that he liked it very much! I had this cask of home-brewed "hop-beer" analysed, and found that it contained rather more alcohol than some of the strongest alcoholic drinks put on the market. The seller was prosecuted, and it came out in the evidence that he had added to his brew (just to give it a flavour!) two over-ripe pine-apples, a quantity of brown sugar, and a tin of methylated spirit, and then put it in the sun to ferment.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now, with the kava, appeared the inevitable meké, not the great out-of-door ballet or war-dance that I have described in Chapter II, but merely the chanting recitation of ancient songs (or modern doings) by some ten or twelve men, seated and swaying their bodies and waving arms and hands in time to the music. (This of course was in the nature of a special performance, and was nothing to do with the preceding chant of the old men while the yangona was actually being made.)

These "posture songs" are a very frequent and popular amusement in the evenings, and the people are wonderfully expert at both recitation and movement, through long practice from childhood. In the case of modern events the "libretto" is sometimes made up as they go along (I fancy I caught references to myself and my journey once or twice during the evening), but more often a native poet will retire to the woods or some quiet place for a day or two beforehand and seek



inspiration for his theme. A medical student who worked under me at one time was a well-known poet in his district, and his services were in great demand.

These songs of the South Seas are essentially dramatic recitations that find their poetry in rhythm rather than rhyme, and an extraordinary pitch of frenzy is often brought about by the sheer excitement of the rhythmic chanting and the movement. I have had long discussions on this point with that "admirable Crichton," Colonel Sir Ronald Ross, F.R.S. ("Malaria Ross"), who, besides being a skilled physician, mathematician, and one of the world's leading scientists, is also a poet, a dramatist, and a novelist. He considers that the excitement engendered is comparable to the mental intoxication of rhythm brought about in the dancing dervishes in Egypt, whom he has closely watched on frequent occasions. It is perhaps a crude form of poetry, but it is, after all, the root principle of the art.

At last, when nearly dropping to sleep, I intimated as politely as I could that if I heard much more of their excellent meké now there would be none left for me to have the pleasure of hearing on my return journey, so somewhat reluctantly the party broke up, and I was left alone to seek a welcome repose on the giant bed.

I awoke at daybreak feeling somewhat chilled, despite the thick roll of "tappa" that my host had provided me with, for the mountain air has quite a "nip" in it, even in Fiji, in the early morning. The strains of a matutinal hymn from a neighbouring house came floating through the thin walls, and then morning prayers, evidently joined in by the whole household. And this was a village that had been earnestly and thoroughly cannibal less than thirty years before! I could hear them





MACIEN BA, NATIVE POET.







putting in a word for me, and my horse, and all my belongings, with strict impartiality ; but, joking apart, can one help liking such a friendly and hospitable people ? And I say friendly and hospitable advisedly, for even in their worst days the cannibalism—as I have shown in another book—was a mistaken and twisted offspring of an ancient religious ceremony, and when not indulging in these occasional “little relapses,” the Fijians were, even in those days, one of the most hospitable and courteous peoples in the world.

I made my way down to the river, picking one or two ripe and delicious bananas and oranges on the way (how different an orange tastes straight from the tree !), and had a refreshing swim in the crystal clear water, and then took a stroll through the town, attracted by a mysterious and rhythmical tapping that seemed to come from beneath a large mango-tree. Here I found some women already at work, beating out, with curious rectangular but grooved mallets, some of the famous bark-cloth of the South Seas.

This cloth, whose Polynesian name is “tappa” (“masi” is the Fijian expression until the final decoration is put on, when it is called “gatu”), is made by expanding under pressure the bark of the paper-mulberry-tree (*Broussonetia*), which has been previously soaked in water. The strips are hammered against a long flat board, and the women, sometimes a couple, sometimes as many as a dozen, doing it, often keep up a not unpleasant song in time to the beating. But on a still day the incessant tapping is apt to get on one’s nerves, and when living at Lomaloma I had to suggest to the workers that the west end of the town, away from the houses, was more conducive to good tappa-making than any



other quarter. By a stroke of luck, the first lot turned out in the new place *was* exceptionally good, and peace was ensured at our end for ever after.

The decorative pattern is applied by means of stencils cut from the smooth fresh banana leaf, and a bold linear design, generally in brown and black dyes, is produced, which is rather effective for this particular sort of work. Immense sheets of the tappa are made,—a favourite gift at weddings,—and it is used for interior decorations (in a manner corresponding to our dadoes, or even wall-papers), for partitions across rooms, for blankets, and even for mosquito-screens. Although the use of English-made net screens is spreading, for they are naturally more airy, the old native name, “gatu,” is still often used to denote an English screen, a thing that rather puzzled us when the servant first asked if he was to send the “gatus” to the wash with the other things.

What a vision of loveliness I saw on climbing a little rise at the back of the town and looking up the valley! Down below the river shone as a broad silver band gleaming in the sunlight, and curving and winding its way between the sloping hillsides, which looked in the distance as if clothed in short green grass, but which were really covered by tall feathery reeds, a very valuable article to the natives for house-building, etc. And beyond, in all directions, the great mountain masses were flung in seeming disorder, extending in the distance to grey-purple shadows half hidden in the mist that wreathed their summits. Nearer at hand were the brown thatched roofs of the native village, looking more like a mass of neat square haystacks than anything else, while down their midst a bright green carpet of



well-kept grass, the "rara" or square, bordered by spreading breadfruit-trees.

I strolled down to the village again and had a closer look at the houses, the construction of which in Tholo is somewhat different to that of the coastal towns. They are built square instead of oblong, and the roof is very high-pitched and supported mainly upon a huge central pillar of the beautiful brown vesi wood. (In Lau the house-ends are rounded, and in Samoa the whole house is circular.)

Growing on the surrounding platform, the surface of the "yavu," were bright-coloured crotons and flowering shrubs, for all South Sea peoples have an inborn love of beauty, never more clearly shown than in their keen appreciation of the decorative effects of the lovely wreaths and necklaces of blossoms in which they appear on all festal occasions. A single bloom of the beautiful hibiscus coyly placed on one side of the head is a sign that a South Sea maiden is fancy free,—but not averse to being wooed; while—contrary to the custom at home—the fair danseuse in a meké will, at its conclusion, not receive gifts of flowers from an admirer, but will divest herself of her long floral necklet (*salusalu*) and drop it at the feet of the man in the audience who appears best in her eyes.

A curious custom, which is still to be found in the country districts, shows which girls are unmarried and which are married—or ought to be! This is the wearing of the "tombé," or plaited locks of hair on one side of the head. The rest of the hair is arranged as they choose, but on one side two or three tresses of it must hang down as separate twisted plaits. Formerly this custom also existed among the unmarried men, but I only once



saw men so singled out, and this, strangely enough, was during the last week I was in Fiji, up in the Mathuata district, at the north end of the Colony, when I had to make a roundabout journey in the *Amra*.

It was now time to be thinking of breakfast, so I made my way back to the house, only to find the inevitable boiled yam—not very palatable by itself to a white man. After a little trouble I managed to secure some eggs; the first two or three were distinctly ancient, but I persevered until I found a couple of fresh ones. Natives seldom eat eggs themselves, so they do not appreciate the subtle difference.

Next came a formal inspection of the town with the head-man, a house-to-house visit to see that all was hygienically correct. But I seldom found much wrong with the inland villages, for—sad to relate—the more primitive these people remained the more scrupulously clean they appeared to be. The reason for this has been well shown by Sir Basil Thomson, who pointed out that the fear of witchcraft (still distinctly present, despite their regular attendance at chapel) has always forced the people to clean up, and burn and otherwise destroy, every scrap of refuse, for it is with such unconsidered trifles that the magician works his wicked will, unknown, against one's health. When this fear of magic begins to give way before the tide of civilization the people get careless and untidy, and this transition stage is the worst. Eventually, education and a thorough teaching of hygiene in the schools will, it is hoped, bring them back again to the neat and tidy ways of their fathers, for they are naturally a clean people. The village that I was inspecting on this occasion was a model of cleanliness, and as one of the results I found very few sick



people requiring attention, an object lesson to any doctor.

And so to horse once more, after presenting my host, who certainly did not look for reward, with a small gift. With kindly farewells of "Sa Mothe" from the people ringing in my ears, I turned upstream along the river bank towards Natuatuathoko, the old mountain fortress, and my ultimate destination.



## CHAPTER XI

### BEACH-COMBERS AND CORAL ISLANDS

I CONSIDER myself fortunate that my first years in the South Seas should have been spent among such primitive surroundings and in such close touch with the people as was the case in my residence in the Singatoka and Tholo districts of Fiji. Thrown on my own resources from the first, I should have been forced, even had I not wished it, to a closer study of the language and habits of the people than would otherwise have been possible, and it is to this lucky chance that I give all the credit for the foundation of any of the more scientific knowledge of the Pacific Islanders that I may afterwards have been able to acquire.

The people were rough and uncouth, but very likeable for all that, and in knowing more or less intimately their home-life and their ideas and aspirations, I was able to see things from the natives' point of view, a factor which I found an inestimable benefit to me afterwards when it fell to my lot to control the destinies of the Lau Islands.

Owing to the distance from Fiji, this large group of islands, with its more Polynesian type of native, had always been left more in the direct control of the Resident Stipendiary Magistrate (or District Commissioner, as he was afterwards called) than any other of the great provinces of Fiji; and to strengthen this policy he was also made an Assistant to the Commissioner for the Native Affairs of the whole Colony. The purely native matters of Lau, like those of other provinces, were



nominally administered by a Roko or native governor,—the official heir to the old kings of Lau,—but the advice of the Assistant Native Commissioner had always to be applied for; and thus all the real power lay, if he used tact, with the white official in charge.

Some of my predecessors, such as Sir George Le Hunte and Sir Basil Thomson, were men who in their early days had already shown evidence of the qualities that were to make them eminent in after life, so that when I took up the appointment it was with certain misgivings, as I knew that I should have no easy task in trying to keep up to the high standard they had set. Of the great career of Sir George Le Hunte I have already written, and the life of Sir Basil Thomson has been no less varied or eminent. The son of the well-known Archbishop of York, he set his face towards the South Seas and a life of adventure at an early age, and by the time he was twenty-nine had already served in Fiji, New Guinea, and Tonga, achieving the distinction of being no less than Prime Minister of the latter kingdom, a most fascinating office, as is fully described in one of his very interesting books. He subsequently became Governor of Dartmoor Gaol, Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard, and is now holding another office of very great importance to the nation's welfare.<sup>1</sup> He has, however, never lost his love of the South Seas, and it has been my privilege in letters and conversation to receive from him some very interesting observations on Lau and Fiji as he remembered them in the old days.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Since I wrote the above, the dramatic discarding of Sir Basil Thomson at the height of his career has caused an intense excitement in the House of Commons and a stir through all England. Sir Basil Thomson stood for the forces of law and order against the sinister under currents of Red Communism. God knows what the future will bring about.



When I arrived in the Lau Islands I found certain old and dusty reports filed away in the office, reports by some of my predecessors on various dead and gone official matters, but which nevertheless scintillated with romance, and how could they help it in such surroundings! I had leaped as it were into another world. From the more or less prosaic inland country of the Singatoka Valley, and the somewhat uncouth natives of that part, I had stepped into a veritable fairyland of small sunlit islands, clear blue lagoons and magic corals, and handsome smiling natives, intelligent, well-mannered, and courtly to a degree. The contrast was really amazing, and though custom hardens us to all things, and in time I took everything as a matter of course, and—as was only natural—could not help sometimes seeing faults, I could never quite forget the sharp difference between Western and Eastern Fiji, a difference which was really that between Melanesia and Polynesia.

Not that the people were unduly sophisticated and thereby spoilt; they were merely on a higher plane of intelligence. For instance, they had a different and more developed system of land tenure, and also individual rights were more clearly established than in the main part of Fiji, where the communal system still reigned supreme. Every little islet, whether capable of supporting life or not, was definitely known and its ownership recognized; so that the band of long-haired lunatics who cruised round the Pacific some years ago in a crazy ship, with a case of hymn-books and a crazy piano, in order to find an unclaimed island and establish a new religion, would have had no chance in Lau, nor in fact anywhere else, as every island in the Pacific is now undoubtedly charted and placed beneath some definite



flag. After losing their property, and nearly losing their lives, in a hurricane, these would-be island snatchers returned home to America, sadder but wiser men.

The Lau Islanders are very much like the natives of Raratonga (in the Cook Islands) in type, and when visiting that place I was also much struck by the similarity in the look of the country itself, the villages, and the vegetation. The only marked difference was that the Raratongans wore hats and trousers, which distinctly lessened their picturesque appearance.

For a Lau Islander, proudly arrayed in the flowing folds of his native sulu, and standing like a bronze figure at the edge of some reef-pool, is a vision of classical beauty that can hardly have been surpassed in ancient Greece.

One must not necessarily imagine, however, that these happy people were in a supremely innocent state of virtue, for that would have been too insipid for anything. They frequently broke the law and kept the Magistrate busy, but as a rule they committed their peccadillos with such an air and with such a smiling disregard of the conventions that one's sympathies were apt to lay as much with the culprit as with the prosecution, even when one knew that there was really a good case. Moreover, what the white man called virtue was often not a virtue with them; while, vice versa, what the white man called a crime was often in their eyes merely a proof of superior skill and cunning. It has taken us a thousand years or more to build up our law, adapting it to the changes that have slowly but surely taken place in our nation, and obviously it cannot with good effect be suddenly applied to South Sea natives, who, though rapidly approaching our state of civilization, have never had to pass through all the intermediate stages. For this reason



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a certain amount of latitude should always be given in dealing with native delinquents, for even though they may have been taught by the missionaries that, for instance, stealing is a crime,—and by this time they *do* realize that it is,—yet there is not the ingrained idea about it that comes as second nature to ourselves.

To show the different ways they have of looking at a thing, there was the case of a South Sea burglar who was once brought up before me. He had one night broken into one of the stores, that of a half-caste trader named Arthur Evans, armed with an electric torch (yet the cinema had not yet arrived in Lau!), and had made away with six yards of flower-patterned print, a mirror, and some tinned salmon! This was a matter for gaol,—I think I gave him three months,—but on leaving the dock he asked me if he might speak to the irate trader for a moment.

“Arthur,” he said, and this signified no special friendliness between them, for the natives seldom use what we call surnames in addressing each other or one of their own class, “it is clear to me that there will be much need of raiment and food, aye, and of kerosene also, for my wife and family while I am working in the Government Service [*sic*], and as the other traders will give me no further credit, I now request that you will remember my need, and advance me, say, five pounds’ worth of goods.”

And this suggestion he put forward in all sincerity. Why should there be ill-will between them? His cunning had been beaten by the superior cunning of his captor, and it was quite just that he should get three months for failing. But the moral point of view hardly entered his mind.



And it is unfortunate that some of the earlier traders deliberately set themselves to exploit the natives, selling them trashy articles for high prices, and sometimes even failing to deliver the goods on some pretext or other, with the not unnatural result that when the eyes of the natives were opened they in their turn had the less scruple about getting even.

A favourite trick in selling copra (which was bought by weight) was to wet a quantity of it beforehand and then put a layer of dry light copra at the top of the sack. As good dry copra fetched anything up to £2 a sack, this made a considerable difference. Another trick was to put stones in among the copra, so that the unfortunate trader was buying rocks at, say, £20 a ton. If the offender was caught it meant a visit to the gaol, but one sack of copra was very like another, and at the end of a busy day there was no certainty as to who had sold the offending sack.

But in connection with this an amusing incident happened. There is undoubtedly gold in Fiji, especially in the quartz reefs of the mountains. (In fact, there was quite a miniature "gold rush" of prospectors from Australia and New Zealand about ten years ago; but it was finally considered that the cost of setting up heavy machinery in the mountains would nearly equal the value of any gold obtainable, so the Fiji boom fizzled out.) Now, late one afternoon a trader whom I knew rushed into my office in a very excited state and asked my opinion on a lump of yellow-streaked quartz. I may mention that besides simultaneously holding every conceivable Government post, from Commissioner down to Receiver of Wrecks, I often found myself in a, quite unmerited, position of family and confidential adviser, arbitrator of



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disputes, or so-called scientific expert on every extraordinary subject under the sun.

I took a dig at the quartz with my knife and applied some acid, and there seemed to be no doubt that he had got hold of a specimen rich in gold. He then explained breathlessly that he had been buying copra all day, a number of canoes having come in for a sports' meeting, not only from along the coast of this island, but from other islands, and on turning out the stuff in a heap at the close of buying he had found to his disgust two or three chunks of rock, including this particular specimen!

Something, however, in this piece had caught his eye, and picking it up he saw the veins of gold clearly visible. He at once began to make inquiries as to who had put stones in their sack of copra, but the natives imagined a trap, and not one would own up, despite his offer of "no awkward questions and a rich reward." And to this day the mystery has never been solved, and there is an *El Dorado* somewhere about these islands, which is unfortunately also a *terra incognita*.

The modern trader is very different from the weird creature, often little removed from a beach-comber, of the early days. There was one old fellow I used to know on Nayau Island who could not read or write, but kept all his "accounts" by means of pieces of knotted string, the same as the ancient South American "Quipu" method, and not unlike the old English tally sticks. In fact, the official census in Fiji three decades ago was taken, as far as the native population was concerned, by means of tally sticks.

Another old trader on Moala Island was a relic of the old days. I used to see him shuffling about his little tin "store" in pyjamas and slippers, in the intervals



of his kava-drinking, trusting entirely to his old and faithful native wife to see that he got the proper weights of copra for the money he paid out.

But in these out-of-the-way places very little actual money changed hands. The trader had his stock of goods, brought up from Suva or Levuka in a sailing-ship about once every three or four months, and a native wanting, say, a bar of soap, a tin of kerosene, some salmon, or some Manchester print, will bring along what he thinks is about an equivalent amount of copra. (If for small purchases, it would be a basketful hung on a stick over his shoulder, or if shopping on a large scale, he will pole in a canoe from round the coast in a leisurely fashion with a sack or two of copra upon it. No one hurries very much in that dream country, life is far too pleasant.)

Their baskets are wonderfully yet simply made of the fresh and glossy dark green leaves of the coconut-palm. Often on some short expedition when accompanied by one or two natives I have felt thirsty and told one of them to get me a nut. He would then select a straight tree,—sometimes towering to the sky for eighty to a hundred feet, for all the world like a ship's mast with a bunch of feathers on top,—and proceed to *walk* up it, his feet placed flat against the trunk and his hands merely clasping it a little higher up. No other native in the world can do this; even in Ceylon they have to secure themselves with a noose. Arrived at the top, he soon twists off and hurls down about a dozen huge green nuts, very different to the brown, dried-up and already husked ones to be seen at home. Down he slides again, and, thrusting a double-pointed stake firmly into the ground, he stabs at the upper end with the nut until, with a



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side twist, he is able to tear off the thick husk in sections. Two deft cracks with the inevitable knife, or even a stone, and the crown of the nut splits cleanly round and is lifted up like a lid, leaving a perfect Nature's cup filled to the brim with the clear cool coconut water or "milk," a drink of a divine flavour when fresh from the tree, and totally different from anything obtained at home.

The nuts not required are then collected and husked, and another man sits down, and with a couple of cuts with his knife splits one of the twelve-foot leaves, and in an incredibly short time has woven a strong basket, complete with handle, in which the nuts are carried until the next halt and the heat of the day seem to indicate another drink.

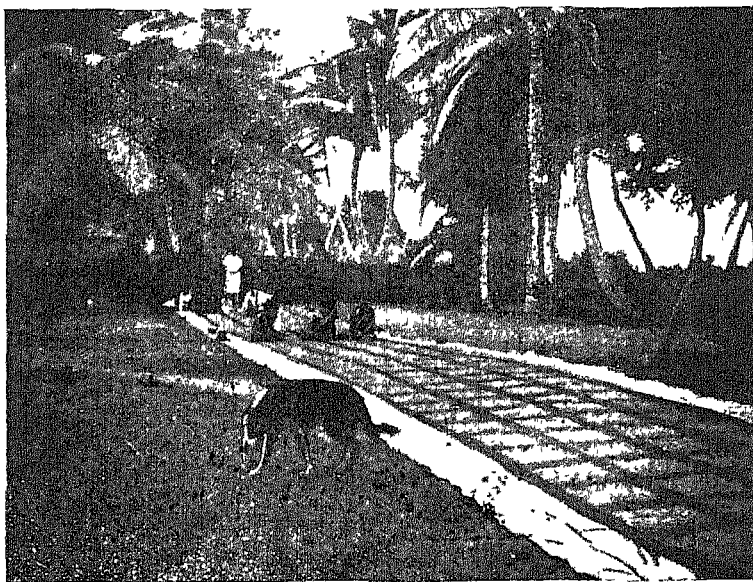
But to return to the isolated traders. There is a great deal of romance in their lives when one comes to think of it, the romance of an island life. But apart from this there were, and still are, many tragedies and mysteries hidden in some of the out-of-the-way spots of the Pacific. The flotsam and jetsam of the civilized world drifts to the ever hospitable shores of these smiling and welcoming islands, and as "civilization" pushes forward its frontiers so do these poor creatures recede before it to seek even more remote places to hide their heads. It was thus that one came across such strange histories in some of the more scattered islets of the Lau group. Fiji itself was in the earlier days the resting-place of many of this "lost legion," but as the colony became more settled they gradually drifted out to the outlying Lau Islands, and to-day are slowly disappearing even from there.

I have known of cashiered army officers, Austrian Counts out of favour, Italian doctors who had made "professional mistakes," escaped French convicts, re-





WAITING UP A COCONUT TREE



STENCILLING TAPPA.







mittance men (there was quite recently an Oxford "billiard half-blue" acting as marker in the saloon at Mac's Hotel), and a hundred and one of that vast army of men who have lost their old positions in the world, yet have kept a modicum of their sense of self-respect; never descending quite to the depths of the city doss-house or the Salvation Army shelter.

Many of them made what were euphoniously called "native marriages"; but some actually did get married by the missionaries to the island maidens, and then, after bringing up a parti-coloured family, sometimes educated, but more often not, they died, lost and forgotten by their friends at home. It is therefore quite possible that to-day the real heirs to some of the oldest titles in Europe may be shinning up coconut-trees, blissfully ignorant of their real position in society, and perhaps it is better for them that they should remain so.

In addition to these men of a higher class there were also rough old stagers of a different stamp, ex-whalers, deserters from ships, broken-down miners, and riff-raff generally from Australia and the South Seas. These were the real old "beach-combers," a genus now nearly extinct. The good old days, when square-face gin was a shilling a bottle and "the Government" was as yet young in the land, were the halcyon days for them, but the necessity of working for a livelihood, even in the South Seas, and the increasing influence of "public opinion," is gradually causing them to disappear. There was an ancient jest that the ships' captains could navigate their way to Levuka Harbour by the line of empty gin bottles floating far out to sea, but this, like many of the other old yarns, is no doubt a tap-room exaggeration.

As a rule these "beach-combers" grow old and die



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in the island to which they have finally drifted, like an old fellow who ended his days as a free patient in hospital soon after I first went out, a man known as "All Serene Jack." He was one of those rare and fearful instances of a man who has had to take a fatal choice at one moment in his life, the choice of eating one's fellow-men or of being eaten oneself. For he had, many years ago, been shipwrecked from the barque *All Serene*, and drifted with the rest of the crew on a raft for weeks on end, until the eventful lot had had to be cast as to which should die. He was a survivor, and there is nothing more to be said!

A man of a very different type was Gideon Vecsey, said to have been a Count, and a favourite at the Court of the old Emperor Francis when even he was a young man. The story is that an order was given,—it is said that there was a lady in the case,—which Vecsey felt that he could not obey, so he snapped his sword across his knee and bowed himself out from the world of the Court, and practically from the world of civilization, for ever. He eventually drifted into a job as an overseer under Mr. William Hennings in the Lau Islands, and I believe some of his family may still be found there.

Then there was Joe Thompson, the mysterious American hermit of Vatu Vara Island, whom I have already mentioned. Curious tales were told about his arrival in Fiji. Apparently a common seaman, he yet seemed to have an endless store of gold from some hidden source which he would not divulge. Even then he was strange in his manner, and shortly afterwards he purchased the small island of Vatu Vara (on which he was said to have been wrecked when he first came), and settled there to a solitary life, or rather a life not entirely solitary,



for he had with him a Manahiki woman called Mary, who looked after him faithfully till the day of his death, forty years afterwards.

The real truth about him was never ascertained, as some early trouble clouded his brain, and he was undoubtedly bordering on insanity during the last few years of his life; but it is said that he was one of three survivors of an unreported wreck on which was a consignment of bullion, and that the other two men "died." Anyhow, there was one corner of his little island where he would never allow anyone to go, the part known as Qila-balavu, and woe betide the passing stranger who innocently moved in that direction. Many projects were on foot for a surreptitious search for "buried treasure," but the secret, if there be one, died with him. The form of his mental aberration took that of religious mania, and he called himself a "Patriarch," wearing on his two holy days (Wednesday and Sunday) a long robe and a little round cap; while he refused to receive any letters, as he said that the end of the world was imminent, and he would not have time to answer them, a useful hint for those bored by excessive correspondence!

After his death old Mary was taken away from the island by the Government steamer and placed with native friends, but she died soon afterwards, heartbroken at his loss. She was another instance of the unswerving and dog-like devotion which Polynesian women so often give to white men whom they have fallen in love with, even to the extent of going against their own people and all their old associations. This woman had saved Thompson on more than one occasion in the early days from incensed bodies of natives out to kill, especially on Naitaumba Island, where he had been for a brief time



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put in as manager, before the original native owners had been forcibly removed, as I have mentioned in Chapter VI.

Another man of mystery was a planter who passed under the name of Giles, though no one ever knew who he really was. He always wore a black silk handkerchief round his throat, and seemed to be in constant dread of someone following him. One day he was found sleeping under a coconut-tree with the handkerchief loosened, and its object was disclosed when a livid scar was observed right round the neck. How the man had lived after such a gash was a marvel, and whether the supposed enemy caught up with him at the last was never known, as he started over to Mango Island one day in the Magistrate's boat, which was afterwards found floating bottom up, empty. . . .

There were other strange characters in Lomaloma, relics from the early prosperous days of the cotton boom, when champagne flowed like water. When the great depression came and they were all ruined, most of those who could not raise their passage money to get away sank to a semi-native life, with a hopeless horizon before them, for no industry had as yet taken the place of cotton, and there was hardly enough money in the colony to keep body and soul together. Generally they tried to drown their sorrows and memories in drink, and whoever wants to blame them should try and imagine what he himself would have done in their place, left alone in a hopeless condition with an unsalvageable property, yet always hesitating to leave it lest its value might revive. Other men, traders exiled from their homes and passing a solitary existence in the hopes of some day making their fortune, also took to drink as a companion, so that



a gathering of three or four whites nearly always meant a hospitality at the house where they met that was bound to end in only one result. Yet it was all meant so well that the difficulty was to avoid being a party to it without giving offence.

I shall never forget an amusing experience I had soon after my arrival at Lomaloma. I had been made, by virtue of my office, I suppose, Honorary President of the Lomaloma Rifle Club; and in return for some slight assistance I had given at various times to the Club nothing would satisfy them but to give me a formal dinner. It had been a hot day, and the members, about a dozen in number, had been assembling from the neighbouring islands all day long, each new arrival being greeted with cheers,—and of course refreshment,—like a long-lost brother.

At the appointed hour I duly set forth to the house where the dinner was to be held, and was received in the outer verandah by a smiling host, who in an aside apologized for the absence of two of the members, "owing to a slight indisposition, but the others," said he, looking round, "are, I think, all here."

I shook hands with each of them, but there somehow seemed fewer than there should be.

"Where's Blank?" cried out the host.

But Blank was not to be found, till a search revealed him peacefully sleeping on a couch in an adjoining room, and not to be roused.

"Never mind," said our host cheerfully, "we will start as we are."

"But Dash seems to be missing," said another. And Dash *was* missing, until, on our sitting down, my foot knocked against what I thought was a dog under the



table, when a loud snore proclaimed the presence of Dash, not at the festive board, but already under it.

So we started the famous Rifle Club dinner with eight, but by the time the second course was completed we were reduced to six, and before the dinner was over my host was solemnly proposing my health "on behalf of the assembled Rifle Club," which at that moment consisted of himself and one other man !

This was of course an exceptional occurrence, and, as I have said, most of the men had been travelling since early morn through the heat of the day, and cooling drinks had seemed necessary to get up an appetite for dinner. Which rather reminds me of the tale about the musically inclined host who had just imported a new piano and who was giving a somewhat mixed dinner party to planters, traders, and others. "Now," said he, affably, to one of the latter, "shall we have just one sonata before dinner ?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do," replied the other, "just to wash the dust away."

At all events, the liquor that was indulged in was good Scotch whiskey, and not the fatal absinthe of the similarly placed French exiles in Tahiti. At some of the "clubs" in that island I noticed that this was a chief feature of an attempt to reproduce the dearly loved café life of far-off Paris, regardless of the extreme difference in climate, and absinthe is even worse than whiskey as a drink for the tropics. It was strange, too, to see in this French colony the strict adherence to the military uniform, often tightly buttoned round the neck to the obvious discomfort of the wearer. I happened to be in Tahiti just a few months before the war started, and met there the Deputy-Governor, a jolly little fat man called Charlier



(brother of the famous Admiral), who told me he was about to go home to Paris to press the claim of Tahiti for the establishment of a wireless service. (Poor fellow! he was drowned in the s.s. *Afrique* in that terrible storm in 1919 in the Bay of Biscay, just as he was proceeding to take up, on promotion, a governorship in French West Africa.)

Unfortunately for Tahiti, the wireless scheme was too late, and German cruisers, *Scharnhorst*, *Leipsic*, and *Gneisenau*, came along without warning, shelling my old friend the little French gunboat *Zelee*, and smashing up the principal club and some of the other chief buildings.

I happened to have an indirect association with each of the three stages in the pathway of that German fleet across the ocean to its doom. The first little scene was at Fiji, where they passed within a few miles of my home in the Lau Islands, and were only deflected from their intention of proceeding to Suva, the capital, and blowing it to bits, by a clever device on the part of Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott, the Governor. It is said that he caused to be sent out from the powerful Suva wireless station a message to the mighty warship, H.M.A.S. *Australia*, somewhat to the following effect:—"Thanks for message. Shall expect you to-morrow at daylight." As the *Australia* was not within a thousand miles of Suva at that moment, they would have had to break all records to keep the appointment! But the ruse answered its purpose, and the Germans swerved round and fled.

They next made for Tahiti, as I have already described, where they were more successful, and then came the action at Coronel, with the loss of Admiral Craddock and all his brave men. After the Armistice, when I was administering the government of the Falkland Islands,



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Captain Goddard, who was acting as my A.D.C., and who had been performing similar duties for Sir William Allardyce at the time when Admiral Craddock called in there just prior to Coronel, told me of a curious coincidence that had happened. The Admiral had a favourite Chinese bowl that he had obtained during one of his visits to China, and which he rather regarded as a mascot, it having come safely through all his voyages all over the world. The last day he was at the Falklands he picked this up to show to somebody, and it slipped through his fingers to the floor, receiving a bad crack right across it. "There," he said with a wry smile, and obviously put out, "there goes my luck, cracked like this bowl." And so it was, for the next heard of him was that the German cruisers had sent him to the bottom, only to meet themselves, a few weeks later, the dramatic surprise that Admiral Sturdee gave them at the Falklands, which settled the trembling fate of our sea supremacy in South American waters for ever.

Admiral Sturdee afterwards drew for me a little diagram of Stanley Harbour and the disposition of the fleets at the opening of the battle, sketching it out in a few seconds and keeping up a running commentary the while which made it clear to the veriest layman. I have it still, a very interesting souvenir.

The Fijians were greatly elated at the Falkland Islands result, as, being natural seamen, their thoughts all through the war were more concerned with the salt-water manoeuvres than with the actual land campaigns. Rumours, as always, were very prevalent, for the native has a fertile imagination, and no story loses by being passed on from mouth to mouth. Thus, on the top of the reports of Big Bertha and its long-distance shelling of Paris came



a rumour of a gun "whose shell took nine days to fly through the air!" but opinions seemed to be divided as to whether this was a British gun or a German one.

As a rule, such rumours were more or less silly and harmless, but they might have caused trouble, especially at the time when the German raider *Seeadler* was actually in Fiji waters, so it was always as well to show how foolish the habit was, when possible, and I once caught a party of them very nicely, as follows:—

There happened at the time to be a bad small-pox outbreak in New South Wales, and extra precautions were taken against admitting it to Fiji, which were entirely successful. But the next I heard was that a sailing-ship had just come to anchor at Lomaloma with a yarn that the small-pox had already got into the colony, and that these people had just fled from Levuka, where half the inhabitants were already dead. As in the mail which they brought with them there was no mention of this at all, I guessed that they were doing it simply to make the local people's hair stand on end even more than it usually did, but I decided to teach them a lesson. So I had the whole fourteen of them marched up to the hospital and isolated in a corner of the grounds, and proceeded to vaccinate the lot, as coming from an infected place;—"just," as I remarked to them, "to be on the safe side." The vaccine took well, and several of them had quite painful arms for a week, and I think they left Lomaloma deciding not to tell quite such tall stories in future.

As they were talking in another language, they had not even the excuse that they mentioned "small-pox" as the easiest thing to say, like the cottager at home who sent an urgent note to the doctor to say that his wife



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was down with small-pox, and whose plea of justification to the angry doctor on arrival was that he "couldn't spell rheumatism, and in any case thought it a sure way to get the doctor quickly."

But curious mistakes in English words *are* often made by natives, as in the case of a great lout of a servant we once had who came running up to my wife crying like a big baby that he had been "bitten by a 'ONEY," meaning that he had been stung by a bee. Another man found one of her gloves dropped in the garden and brought it in, saying that he had found the lady's "stocking." He not unnaturally assumed that all clothing for the extremities would have the same name.

But if natives misinterpret English words, we, I am sure, are just as frequently led astray by native ones. Like the young lady at her first dinner-party after arriving in India, who was somewhat alarmed when the sporting subaltern who had taken her in suddenly said, "Oh, I must show you my tum-tum after dinner. I have just had it painted black and yellow." It didn't occur to him that she could be ignorant of the fact that a tum-tum was a dog-cart!

As a rule a native tries to make a word already in his language fit some new article that the white man has introduced, often with ludicrous results. Such as "Livaliva" (the lightning) for electric light. A servant will therefore say (if one is fortunate enough to have it laid on), "Shall I turn on the lightning?" By the way, real lightning was turned on to the spacious and comfortable, though wooden, Government House in Fiji recently with disastrous effect, for it was burnt to the ground in a heavy thunderstorm, after being insured only a day or two before. It must be seldom that a



company has to pay up for a fire caused by lightning, almost as rare an event as damage caused by a flood. Which reminds one of the insurance agent who was trying unsuccessfully to get a Jew to take out a policy. "Accident?" said he. "Got it already," said Moses laconically. "Burglary . . . Life . . . Sickness?" persisted the other. "No good. Got 'em all," was the unencouraging answer. "Flood?" at last ventured the agent. "Ah, now what can one do with a flood?" replied Moses briskly.

The only flood I ever experienced in Fiji (for I was never stationed on the Rewa River, where they had them almost monthly) was, curiously enough, a flood caused by the sea, a sort of tidal wave brought about by the banking up of the great ten-mile stretch of water of the Lomaloma lagoon at the height of a hurricane. We watched, between a crack of the shutters, the sea rising up the beach and coming across the road into our grounds, surrounding the wooden bungalow, until it was isolated in about five feet of foaming, angry waves, apparently on the verge of sweeping it away altogether. This went on for several hours, a trying experience, as it is of course impossible to venture out of doors in a hurricane, even if there had been no water.

Yet on a calm day this lagoon is, I think, one of the most peaceful and beautiful places in the world.

There could be nothing more fascinating than taking a canoe and being poled across the shallow waters that covered the shore-reef, the smooth gliding of the canoe hardly disturbing the myriad forms of life that could be plainly seen moving about in the translucent depths below. This, of course, was all inside the lagoon, for the outer reef that surrounded it varied from three to ten



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miles away; and against this the thunderous waves of the open ocean boomed incessantly, the great rollers bursting with mighty explosions as they overbalanced and fell, towering curves of green water sparkling in the sunlight, upon the jagged line of coral that became exposed as each preceding wave was sucked away.

Even inside the lagoon there were considerable depths, and over such a vast inland sea some nasty storms were often met; but it was nevertheless always a relief to get home through the narrow passage, comparatively safe from the wild seas outside.

Nearer the shore, and in front of the Government station, I had had a big stone causeway built, which curved round on the windward side to form a sheltered inner harbour in which small boats could be docked, and across the sandy bottom which formed the floor of this one could study almost every form of tropical marine life imaginable. There were deep blue star-fish, lying apparently quite still until one compared their slowly changing position against some stone or other mark; thick black *bêche-de-mer*, looking for all the world like huge fat caterpillars slowly moving about; and small red and white zebra-marked crabs, which vigorously scuttled along backwards or sideways as the fancy pleased them. And here and there a large whelk-shaped shell, but of brilliant colouring, would suddenly come into view, walking rapidly across the sand, a mystery to newcomers, but easily explainable to those who knew the house-stealing propensities of the hermit crab.

Then, in the middle depths, were seen small fish, but fish that surely must have come from some grottos or caves in fairyland, fish whose gorgeous rainbow hues can never be imagined by those who have only lived in temperate



zones. There were spotted fish, striped fish, patched fish, round fish, narrow fish, and flat fish, and one which changed its shape before one's very eyes, the extraordinary spiky balloon fish, which normally lay flattened out on the sand, but distended itself into a round ball covered with menacing spikes at the slightest disturbance. He also had a beak like a parrot, and peculiar goggle eyes—in fact, a regular nightmare of a fish.

One of the commonest, yet the most beautiful of all, was a little fellow about two or three inches long, of the most brilliant electric blue colour imaginable, and to see him flitting about in and out of the coral and seaweed was a perpetual vision of delight. The yellow and black zebra fishes were fairly common, too, and so very bold that one could almost reach down and stroke them; while the little brown fish with a patch on each side,—about which there is a native legend of a goddess who there grasped them,—would nibble all round a piece of bait dropped down, keeping all the time one eye cocked in a most knowing manner at the human who was showering down their dinner from the outside world above them.

Then there were some small fish that always kept together in shoals of scores or even hundreds, moving to right or left apparently at a word of command from their leader, with the precision of trained soldiers. These usually stayed in quite shallow water; and a neighbour of ours, who had a delightful and most intelligent mongrel fox-terrier (born with no tail, by the way), one day called my attention to the fact that she had taken up her position waist deep in the water, and was making every now and then a snap at something passing by. We crept nearer, and to our surprise found old Patu,—for that was her name,—catching fish, one or two out of each



shoal that came sweeping past. And after that Patu became a keen fisherwoman, and I really think she studied the currents and tides, because she used to move about to different fishing-grounds at different times of the season. But what was more interesting was that in course of time she had a litter of puppies, of which only one was saved,—also born tailless,—which was presented to me, and as the youngster grew up she taught him, too, to fish; and he soon became as expert as his mother, often cunningly edging her off his own private fishing-ground when the fish happened to be scarce.

Sometimes one would hoist the triangular mat sail and drift a little way down the coast, the light craft responding to the slightest breath of the wind. The men are keen sailors, and wonderfully expert at managing these dug-out canoes, whose outrigger must always be kept to windward. This means lifting out the mast, sail, and all, and twisting them round when a tack is made, no easy task in some of the very large vessels that used to be made, but which are now, alas! rapidly dying out. Governor Sir Henry May ("the Glarer," as he was called, from his habit—I am sure unconscious—of transfixing everyone he met with a fierce and prolonged stare through his eyeglass) was a great sportsman and yachtsman, and more than once took a personal part in these canoe races, in which a most exhilarating speed can be obtained. This was a pastime, too, that fascinated Ralph Stock, the novelist, who stayed with us on one occasion when getting "atmosphere" for his books, and who has recently made still another of his bold voyages across the Pacific in what is practically a toy sailing-boat.

Loading out of my stone-walled "boat-dock" there



ran between the reef a narrow lane of deep green water, the sea entrance to the dock, and along the sides of this one could see the branching corals in the clear depths glowing forth in every shade of colour, from a delicate turquoise to a deep purple-red, with here and there, by contrast, a fairy vision of a filigree mass of purest white, a perfect under-sea garden. I never used to tire of watching these strangely beautiful scenes as I slowly glided about from place to place in the silent canoe, gently thrust on by the invisible fingers of the scented breeze that came on calm days from the west, and off the land. And turning shorewards, I could see my home above the long white beach that was bordered by a line of palms—palms which swayed and bowed in the slight zephyrs that for ever stirred their slender feathery leaves. A vision of perfect peace which I often call to mind again, my best-loved memory of those far-off Southern Seas. . . .